2

16956

EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM
DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

NOAKHALI.

BY

J. E. WEBSTER,

INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE.

PRINTED AT THE PIONEER PRESS
ALLAHABAD

1911

PLAN OF CONTENTS.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

CHAPTER III

THE PEOPLE.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

CHAPTER V.

PRICES, RENTS, WAGES AND MEASURES.

CHAPTER VI.

AGRICULTURE.

CHAPTER VII.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

CHAPTER IX.

OCCUPATIONS, MANUFACTURES AND TRADES.

CHAPTER X.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

CHAPTER XII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

CHAPTER XIII.

EDUCATION.

CHAPTER XIV.

GAZETTEER.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

1. Statistical Account of Noākhāli by Sir William Hunter, 1876.

2. Rājmālā (Bengali) by Kailāsh Chandra Singh.

3. Report on the Survey and Settlement of Cḥakla Roshnābād by J. G. Cumming, 1899.

4. Noākhāli, Itihāsh by Piāri Mohan Sen (Bengali, not very reliable).

5. Mr. Duncan's Report on Sandwīp, 1778.

6. Mr. Walter's Report on Sandwīp, 1819.

7. Voyages of Cæsar Fredericke, Hakluyt's Voyages, Vol. V.

8. Recent Changes in the Ganges, James Ferguson. Journal of the Geographical Society of London, Vol. XIX, page 329.

9. Ancient India, R. C. Dutt.

10. The Portuguese in India, F. C. Danvers.

11. Bernier's Mughal Empire.

12. Stewart's History of Bengal.

13. Fifth Report on the Affairs of the East India Company.

14. Colebrooke's Supplement to the Bengal Regulations.

15. District Report on the Census of 1891.

16. Official Correspondence and Publications.

GAZETTEER

OF THE

NOAKHALI DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

Introductory. The district of Noākhāli lies between 22° 10′ and 23° 17′ north latitude and between 90° 39′ and 91° 35′ east longitude. At the census of 1901 its area was 1,644 square miles and its population 1,141,728.

Origin of name. The district takes its name from that of the river, the Noākhāli Khāl (or new channel) on which the head-quarters station is built.

Boundaries. The district is bounded on the north by the district of Tippera and the Native State of Hill Tippera, on the east by Hill Tippera and the Chittagong district, from which the big Feni river separates it, on the south by the Bay of Bengal, and on the west by the main stream of the Meghnā. The western boundary is difficult to find or locate accurately owing to the constant changes in the channel of the Meghnā, but it has been defined by the notification of the 17th September 1891 as the main stream of the Meghnā river.

General configuration. The district consists of a strip of the mainland about 55 miles long from Jāliā Char on the Meghnā to the point at which the big Feni river first touches Noākhāli, and an average depth from north to south of 20 to 22 miles, with a long horn-like peninsula on the extreme north-east running up into Hill Tippera. This north-eastern portion is elevated, undulating, and intersected by numerous hill streams which find their way into the Feni river. West of this the country presents the aspect of a vast rice plain dotted over with numerous villages, where rich groves of areca-nut and coco-nut palms rising out from a dense undergrowth of Māndār trees and other shrubs, make every village look like a forest. A striking feature of the landscape is the multitude of tanks of every size while brick built mosques, white plastered, and exceedingly numerous, help to break the monotony of plain and grove.

Islands.

South of the mainland lie a large number of islands, of which the most notable are Sandwīp, measuring with its appurtenant islands Badu and Siddhi about 20 miles from north-west to south-east, and about 10 miles across, and Hātiā now nearly 25 miles from north to south and about 8 miles broad on an average. Between Hātiā and the mainland are a multitude of *chars* which are constantly changing their positions and boundaries.

The most important of these alluvial formations and their approximate extent are shown in the following list :—

Serial No.	Name of Estate.	Area in square miles.	
1	Char Ghuia Dhopa, Part I ...	·5	In the Bāmni river near the mouth of the Feni.
2	" " " Part II ...	·2	
3	" Kachāpiā	Not known	
4	" Fischi	Do.	
5	" Rām Narayan	1·2	
6	" Pir Baksh	6·4	Additions to the island of Sandwīp.
7	" Badu Lakhi	22·5	
8	" Lance	·5	Additions to the island of Hātiā.
9	" King	11·2	
10	" Bharat Sen	4·8	
11	" Iswar Ray, Part I ...	25·7	
12	" " " Part II ...	2·6	
13	" Nilakhimay Kunjatoli ...	1·5	
14	" Nālchira	29·1	
15	" Amānullah	12·8	
16	" Mir Muhammad Ali, Part I...	21·6	
17	" Mir Muhammad Ali, Part II	Not yet surveyed.	
18	" Ghāzi	7·1	
19	" Alexander	17·1	
20	" Hasan Husain	1·3	
21	" Goshai	·9	
22	" Lakhi Afzal Fakir ...	·3	
23	" Sekandar Mudafat Dulagāzi	·3	
24	" Mehar	4·7	
25	" Niāmat	·7	
26	" Jabar	14·9	Islands in the Hātiā river.
27	" Jubilee	7·5	
28	" Jum Mādhale	·3	
29	" Bailey including Batu, Langoha and Sona.	11·9	
30	" Macpherson	Not yet surveyed.	
31	" Princess Alexandra ...	·6	
32	" Bedoma Private Estate ...	... ...	
33	" Poragacha Do. ...	... ...	
34	" Sita Do. ...	... ...	
35	" Behāri	15·7	Islands in the Meghnā separate from Hātiā.
36	" Lawrence	2·1	
37	" Bose	2·2	
38	" Bansi	14·2	Formations at the mouth of Dākātiā river.
39	" Mirzamārā	1·9	
40	" Udmārā	1·6	
41	" Abābil	2·1	

The *chars* of the oldest formation present much the same appearance as the mainland; there are villages consisting of little groups of houses surrounded by *māndār* trees and palms, with intervening stretches of rice-field. The newer *chars* are marked by the absence of trees, and consist generally of a uniform cultivated plain intersected with numerous *khāls*, with here and there bare patches where the soil is still unfit for cultivation. Yet younger formations are the banks barely above water, but covered with grass on which herds of buffaloes may be seen grazing; and youngest of all are the banks of mud and sand emerging from the river only when the tide is low, and still of no value but to the fishermen. All along among these *chars* and islands may be seen traces of constant change, upright or overhanging banks marking the places where the river is cutting away the dry land, and gently sloping banks those where new land is forming.

Rivers.

On the west and south of the district and between the islands flows the Meghnā, and on the east the Feni sub-division is drained by the great and little Feni rivers. In the intervening country there are no rivers of any size and the drainage there depends on a few tidal channels or *khāls*, of which the principal are the Noākhāli Khāl, the Mahendra Khāl, and the Bhawāniganj Khāl.

The Meghnā.

The Meghnā is the great river which in older days formed the uttermost limit of the wanderings of the Aryans. The story runs that when in their wanderings the Pāndavas reached its banks, Bhīm, the most adventurous of those heroes, was sent across to explore the country on the further side and on his return adressed his elder brother, Yudisthira, in such intemperate language that the latter turned his back forever on a land which could so pervert a man of gentle breeding; and thenceforward the country east of the Meghnā has been to orthodox Hindus *Pāndava barjita desh*, a land of utter barbarism Originally, the Meghnā seems* to have been only the estuary of the rivers of the Surmā Valley.

The Brahmaputra then flowed far to the west, and at some not very distant date, perhaps as the result of the great convulsion of nature to which the Madhupur jungle owes its upheaval, it turned eastward and met the Meghnā. Then began a great battle of the rivers, ending about the beginning of last century in the Brahmaputra turning back more or less to its former course and meeting the Ganges at Goalundo, whence the combined streams fall into the Meghnā near Chāndpur. At present the Meghnā carries to the sea the great bulk of the waters of the Brahmaputra and Ganges, as well as of the Sylhet rivers. It touches the Noākhāli district first a little way below Chāndpur at the corner of Char Abābil. Here it is about four miles wide. A few miles further down nearly opposite Lakhipur, it receives a portion of the waters of the Dākātiā river. A little further down

* Fergusson—Recent Changes in the Ganges, Journal of the Geological Society of London, Vol. XIX, p. 321.

again, about latitude 22° 48′, it divides on either side of Char Lawrence. The right channel, known henceforward as the Shāhbāzpur river, lies in the district of Bākarganj. The other channel passes on between the mainland of Noākhāli on its left and Chars Shibnāth, Bihāri, Bose, Sitā, and Alexander on the right. Shortly before reaching the southernmost point of the mainland, the river is again divided by the large new island of Char Jabar, the right or southern stream becoming the Hātiā river, which flows to the sea between the islands of Hātiā and Sandwīp, while the left or northern branch under the name of the Bāmni river flows on between Sandwīp and the mainland as far as the mouth of the Feni river, then turning south along the coast of Chittagong and again changing its name reaches the Bay of Bengal by the Sandwīp channel. Between the islands of north and south Hātiā there is another wide channel, known as the Kālaiyā, connecting the Hātiā with the Shāhbāzpur river. From Char Abābil to the mouth of the Feni is a distance of about 64 miles, and the Hātiā river is about 32 miles long. The width of the river varies from year to year, not very greatly in the upper reaches, where as the bank advances on the one side it recedes nearly as fast on the other, but showing great changes lower down as islands form and disappear. At present the distance between Hātiā and the mainland is nearly twenty miles (though the island of Char Jabar intervenes), the Bāmni river is more than ten miles wide, while Hātiā and Sandwīp are fully twenty miles apart. But in spite of its great size and the immense volume of water which it carries at all seasons of the year, the Meghnā is not very suitable for navigation. Even in the cold weather from November to February, when there is little fear of storm, the great rise and fall of the tide, which is as much as 18 feet at the springs, and the constantly shifting sandbanks, are serious obstacles to navigation, and after February the estuary is often rough and dangerous.

The most dreaded of all the channels is the Kālaiyā between north and south Hātiā, where the tides coming from either side meet and raise a particularly dangerous sea.

Sir Joseph Hooker in his "Himalayan Journals" lays stress on the great increase in the tidal range going from west to east along the head of the Bay of Bengal. On the west coast the tide rises twelve or thirteen feet, on the east from forty to fifty feet. Noākhāli occupies a central position, and Hooker found the rise of the tide at Hātiā to be only 14 feet, but much more at the mouth of the Feni. The range varies, of course, with the season, and depends also very much on the wind. 'The normal tide,' wrote Mr. Whinfield, Officiating Collector in 1870, 'comes up the easternmost channel by way of the Sandwīp and Bāmni rivers. It is called the Chittagong tide, and makes first. Another tidal wave called the *daula* sweeps round the south of the islands

of Sandwīp and Hātiā, and being deflected by Bākarganj turns to the north through the Hātiā and Shāhbāzpur channels and meets the Chittagong tide off the south-west corner of the mainland. In all the *khāls*, or water-courses, running through Sandwīp and Hātiā from east to west, the tide flows in from both sides, but with most force from the east. At every full and new moon, especially at the time of the equinox, there is a bore, or tidal wave, for several successive days. This wave is highest at the mouth of the Feni river, and in the channel between Hātiā and the mainland, where the tides meet, and it runs up as far as Bhawāniganj. The worst bores occur with a southerly wind. The wave presents the appearance of a wall of water, sometimes twenty feet in height, with a velocity of fifteen miles an hour. The natives say that the maximum height on the east is eighty feet; but this is certainly an exaggeration as the banks are nowhere higher than forty feet above the level of low water.' The bore comes up at the first of the flood-tide with a roar which is heard miles off, and rushes with great force. This renders the navigation of the river extremely difficult, and accidents are constantly occurring. Owing to the shoals at the mouth of the Noākhāli Khāl, boats are obliged to anchor in mid-channel between Hātiā island and the mainland during the ebb, and are often caught by the bore before there is sufficient depth of water for them to ride in, in which case they are frequently driven on the shoals and capsized. Occasionally, at the period of the south-west gales in May and October, these waves roll inland for miles and overflow the smaller islands at the mouth of the Meghnā. In the cyclone of November 1867, Hātiā island was entirely submerged in this way, and sea-drift was found on the embankments in the interior of the island at a height of four feet above the level of the country. On this occasion the wave must, the Collector states, have been forty feet in height, and in the great cyclone of 1876 the waters were piled up to a depth of twelve feet on Sandwīp. The Meghnā is nowhere fordable at any season of the year, but many of the small rivers and creeks are nearly dry at ebb-tide.

Dākātiā.

The first tributary that the Meghnā receives after entering Noākhāli is the Dākātiā river, which rising in the hills and flowing eastwards through the Tippera district, finds its way to the Meghnā by several mouths, of which the southernmost passes Rāipur in Noākhāli. Formerly the Dākātiā was a most important channel for trade to the north and west, and though most of its waters now find their way to the sea through the Chāndpur channel in the Tippera district, the Rāipur mouth is still navigable for country boats at all seasons of the year, and Rāipur is still an important mart from which coco-nut, betel, plantains, and oranges are exported. The length of the river in the Noākhāli district is about 15 miles.

Bhawāniganj Khāl. The next tributary of importance is the Bhawāniganj Khāl, which, rising in the north of Lakhipur *thānā*, passes by Lakhipur and through Bhawāniganj to the great estuary. It is navigable for country boats throughout the year as far as Lakhipur, a distance of twelve miles, though in the dry season big boats can only get up at high tide.

Mahendra Khāl. In Rennell's map the Mahendra Khāl, rising in the Tippera district and flowing southward past Naudonā to the Meghnā, north of Hātiā, appears as the principal internal river of the district, but in its upper reaches it is now much silted up and overgrown with weeds.

Noākhāli Khāl. The Noākhāli Khāl, rising near Begamganj in the centre of the district flows past the town of Noākhāli and is navigable for a distance of 20 miles in the rainy season, but in the winter only at high tide.

Feni river. The little Feni or Dākātiā river, rising in the hills of Tippera and passing through the plains close to Comilla, enters the Noākhāli district near Sikandarpur, and flows in a tortuous course through the western portion of the Feni sub-division for a distance of about 50 miles. It is navigable through its entire length during the cold weather, though much obstructed in parts by shallows and sandbanks. The big Feni river, rising in the hills, enters the district at its extreme eastern point, and from there to the sea forms the boundary between it and the district of Chittagong. About half way in its course along the boundary it receives on its right bank the waters of the Muhuri, a river which rises in the Tippera hills and entering the district at the north-eastern corner of the Chhāgalnaiyā *thānā* flows nearly due south through the east of the Feni sub-division, and is navigable for a distance of 51 miles. The Seloneāh river is a tributary of the Muhuri, and is navigable for a distance of 21 miles between it and the hills. It forms the boundary between Chhāgalnaiyā and Feni *thānās*. These eastern rivers are fed by streamlets running down from the hills, and after heavy rain are liable to overflow their banks and flood the surrounding country.

Besides these rivers, there are numerous small drainage cuts, not deserving the name of rivers, but which during the rains form a ready means of navigation from place to place and help to carry off the water when it begins to fall.

Alluvion and diluvion. The country is of comparatively recent formation and the dividing line between land and water can hardly be said to be definitely fixed even now. To trace the changes in historical times would need a most minute and laborious examination of old records, but a comparison of Rennell's map of the estuary (circa 1780—90 A.D.), Mr Walters map of 1819 A.D., the Revenue Survey maps (1862—67 A.D.), and the rough plans prepared for the use of the Settlement Department, supplemented by a few notes from the old correspondence, will give some idea of the magnitude

of the movements that are even now going on. Of yet older times it must suffice to say that Sandwīp Hātiā and Bāmni are believed to have formed one island, or at least to have been divided by very narrow channels, and that they probably became inhabited before the mainland opposite.

To turn first to Rennell's map; it shows us the Meghnā flowing past Lakhipur, then an important factory of the East India Company, sweeping in a steady curve round the south-west of the district and passing some five miles south of the present station of Noākhāli, and then inclining slightly northward on to the mouth of the Feni where it flowed some two miles south of Companyganj. Rennell shows also the coast line of 1730, which he must have ascertained by enquiries on the spot. This line passed nearly through the present position of Noākhāli town and from there ran nearly east and west, showing that accretion during the fifty years had been chiefly in the centre of the district. Rennell, 1780—90.

In the upper reach of the Meghnā Rennell shows none of the *chars* that now exist, perhaps he did not attempt to give complete details. Hātiā appears as an undivided block of land some 15 miles from north to south, and 10 miles from east to west. Sandwīp is placed very much in the position it now occupies, but between it and the mainland is shown a large island called Bāmni. Alluvion and diluvion must have been going on very fast at that period, and in 1815 it was found necessary to appoint a special officer, Mr. Tucker, to enquire into the state of the *chars*. He prepared a map, but this is not to be found now and without it his report is difficult to follow. In his time a great part of the island of Bāmni had diluviated, and the bed of the river which had flowed between it and the mainland was silting up and on the way to become dry land. The river had also been cutting away land along the southern face of the district, and a new *char*, called Darvesh, was forming south of the town of Sudhārām.

In the year 1819, Mr. Walters found Bāmni still separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, the Machua Duna. With the new forming accretions its south-eastern point stretched below the latitude of Mirka Sarai (in Chittagong) and nearly down to Sitākund. Thence the coast of the mainland ran in a nearly straight line west-north-west, passing 9 miles from Noākhāli, where *char* Darvesh had joined the mainland, and on to *char* Bhuta (latitude 22° 50′). There a turn nearly due north took it past Lakhipur, where *char* Shāmsundar was forming at the mouth of the Dākātiā. Sandwīp was still a single island, 12 miles from the Chittagong coast, and 8 miles from Bāmni, measuring 14 miles from north to south, and 12 from east to west. Neither Badu nor Siddhi had become habitable, but banks are shown in his sketch forming to the north of the island. Hātiā was an island 16 miles by 20 lying 5 to 7 miles away from the mainland and 16 from Sandwīp. To the north Walters, 1819.

it was being washed away and new *chars* were forming to the south and west; indeed the river on the west was full of new islands, some gradually joining up with Hātiā, others being added to Dakhin Shāhbāzpur. Comparing his sketch with Rennell's map we may say that there had been great diluvion from the mouth of the Bhawāniganj Khāl along the south-western coast, and great accretion in the delta of the Feni rivers; while the irruption of the Ganges stream had quite changed the condition of Hātiā.

Hooker, 1850. Sir Joseph Hooker who sailed down the Meghnā in the year 1850 found it moving gradually to the west, leaving much dry land on the Noākhāli side and forming islands opposite that coast, while it was encroaching on the Sundarbans and cutting away the islands in that direction. The mainland of Noākhāli was extending gradually seawards and had advanced 4 miles within 23 years. The elevation of the land was, in his opinion, caused by the overwhelming tides and south-west hurricanes in May and October, which carried the waters of the Meghnā and Feni back over the land in a series of tremendous waves that covered islands of many hundred acres and rolled three miles on to the mainland.

Siddhi was then in existence, for Hooker landed on it and sailed across from there to Hātiā, which he found to be moving bodily to the westward. He records that the surface was flat and about 4 feet above mean high water level, and that the tide rises about 14 feet up the bank and then retires for miles.

Revenue Survey. Coming down to the time of the Revenue Survey we find that large *chars* had formed on the right of the mouth of the Dākātiā river, and that Lakhipur, shown by Rennell as on the banks of the Meghnā, was some three miles away. The shape of the coast line below Lakhipur had changed since 1820. The point of *char* Bhuta had been washed away, and the coast ran nearly south-east from the mouth of the Bhawāniganj Khāl to a point due south of Sudhārām, in about latitude 22° 44′, showing slight diluvion there also. West of this point along the Bāmni river the coast line is shown as convex, and the south-eastern point of Bāmni (now part of the mainland) is in latitude 22° 45′, some miles north of its position in 1819, indicating very extensive diluvion. From latitude 22° 45′ down to 22° 10′, an almost continuous series of *chars* divided the Hātiā from the Shāhbāzpur river. The most northerly of these, *char* Sāhibnāth and *char* Falcon, find no place in Rennell's map, but on the other hand Hātiā which in 1870 lay almost wholly north of latitude 22° 30′, seems to have receded southward, and had received *char* Nālchira covering nearly 200 square miles, on its south, and beyond this again *char* Mīr Muhammad Alī is shown forming in the Bay of Bengal. Passing on to Sandwīp the map shows to its north two new *chars*, Badu and Siddhi, making the total length of the island over 25 miles and its northern point in latitude 22° 42′; the Sandwīp

channel has dwindled to nine miles, but in spite of the new *chars* the Bāmni river is still six miles across at its narrowest. Since then the *chars* in the Meghnā have been extending to the north, seriously impeding navigation. The most northerly of them is *char* Lawrence, just above Sibnāth *char* shown in the published maps. Coming down the river we find the several *chars* much grown and in slightly different position to those shown in the survey maps, and east of *char* Bose lies a big new island, *char* Jabar, with an area of nearly 15 square miles extending across the mouth of the Noākhāli Khāl. Hātiā is being cut away on the east, but is extending rapidly to the south, *char* Sen having formed beyond *char* Mīr Muhammad Alī. The wide channel shown in the maps between north and south Hātiā at one time nearly closed up but has again returned to its former dimensions. In the Hātiā river Tum *char* is being cut away, and *char* Macpherson, shown in the survey maps as just emerging from the water, after having grown into importance, is now once more diluviating. The northern portion of *char* Siddhi has gone, and land is being washed away on the west and accreting on the east of Sandwīp, while *char* Pir Bakhsh has added 5½ square miles to this island.

Coming back to the mainland, the bank at the mouth of the little Feni has been washed away, and that river once more finds its way into the Bāmni channel, some two miles below Companyganj. All along the southern coast of the mainland the river has been encroaching, it is now within some three miles of Noākhāli town, and advancing steadily. In these changes *char* Jabar seems to play an important part, dividing the waters of the Meghnā it throws one strong stream on to the coast of the mainland and another on to north Hātiā, and there is reason to fear that Noākhāli station is in danger of destruction unless something intervenes.

Hills.

There are no hills in the Noākhāli district, though the country on the extreme east is elevated and undulating with spurs from the Tippera hills running out into it.

Marshes.

The northern and central portions of the district are lower than the banks of the Meghnā. It is suggested in Hunter's Statistical Account of the district that these depressions may be due to the great earthquake of 1762, which is said to have engulfed a tract of the country round Lakhipur, 15 miles in extent. By that earthquake* a large tract of land was submerged, other parts were elevated, two volcanoes broke out, and the whole settlement of Chittagong was shattered. Even at Dacca the shock was so violent that the wave from the river swept off a large number of the inhabitants. It is not necessary, however, to seek for any such sudden convulsion of nature to account for the

---

* Fergusson's Delta of the Ganges, Journal of the Geological Society of London, Vol. XIX, page 329.

depression. It is a common feature of deltaic formation that the land nearest the streams rises more rapidly than that further away, and the presence of great masses of still water lying in the low lands tends to exaggerate the difference of level by holding back the river floods and compelling them to deposit their silt before over-running the inland tracts.

In 1875 the Collector of the district gave a list of 77 marshes, covering an area of more than 8 square miles. It is said, however, that at the present date nearly all these marshes have been drained and brought under cultivation, and no doubt their level will now rise steadily year by year until it approaches that of the land upon the banks of the river.

Tanks. Tanks form a striking feature of the district. In every village may be found numerous tanks, large and small. House sites in the low-lying country have to be raised above flood-level and for this purpose earth is dug and a tank formed. This accounts for the small pools that are to be seen adjoining almost every hamlet, but the larger tanks with wide sheets of water, of which there are many in the district, mostly owe their existence to the piety or desire for fame of some raja or landowner. In 1904-05, the number of tanks in the district was returned as 17,985, of which 12,671 were said to afford wholesome water.

Many of the tanks have high banks to keep out the brackish water from the estuary, and these being overgrown with palms and other trees add much to the picturesqueness of the scenery. There are no wells in the district and the rivers being tidal the people depend on these tanks for their water-supply.

Geology. The Tippera hills of which the spurs project into the east of the district are of upper tertiary formation and generally of a dull reddish colour. The rest of the district is alluvial, the soil consisting of an admixture of sand and clay in varying proportions. The soil along the southern face and in the islands is impregnated with salt, which at one time was the most important product of this part of the country.

Botany. The peculiar vegetation of the Sundarbans is represented but sparingly and plant life is confined generally to varieties belonging to the lower Gangetic plain.

The luxuriant growth of palms is the most characteristic feature of the vegetation. The *supāri* (*Areca catechu*) becomes more and more abundant towards the west of the district, and grows almost in forests along the Meghnā above Lakhipur. It is invariably accompanied by the *māndār* (*Erythrina indica*), a thorny tree that serves to shade the young betel-nut and grows thick round every village site. The coco-nut (*nārikel*) is also very common in the west of the district and on the islands, and the toddy palms (*Borassus flabelliformis*) or *tāl*, and the date-palm or *khejur*, are to be seen in most parts.

Mangoes grow freely, though the fruit is almost worthless, the almond tree (*bādām*) is unusually common, and all the ordinary shade and fruit-giving trees of Bengal, the banyan (*bat*), *pipal*, *nim* (*Azadirachta indica*), *gāb* (*Diospyros embryopteris*), *jām*, (*Eugenia jambolana*) or plum, tamarind, *bel* (*Aegle marmelos*), *jalpāi* (*Elæocarpus serratus*), etc., are found. There is no valuable indigenous timber except in Chhagalnāia *thānā*, where a few *chāplās* (*Artocarpus chaplasha*) and *gurjān* (*Dipterocarpus turbinatus*) grow. Generally all timber for boats or houses is imported, but the mahogany and teak trees planted along the roads have done well. There are several varieties of cane, and a good deal of bamboo. Thatching grass (*ulu* or *chhan*) is obtained from the mainland and islands.

Fauna.

The larger carnivora are now scarce, but tigers and leopards occasionally descend from the hills of the Tippera State on to the adjoining villages of the eastern border and carry off cattle and goats. Spotted deer and hog deer frequently commit depredations on the crops in the same locality. The only large wild animals belonging properly to the district are the wild buffalo and the wild pig. The wild buffalo is now found only in *char* Mīr Muhammad Alī in the extreme south of the Hātiā island, where they are so numerous as to be a trouble to the new settlers. Attempts have been made to capture them, but the work is attended with some danger and difficulty and the number captured has not been large. The old bulls are often extremely fierce, but the females and young bulls when caught can generally be tamed if they do not die within the first few days. They interbreed with the tame animals, and on the same *char* wild cattle are found, believed to be descended from domestic cattle which have been allowed to run wild. Wild pigs are found on the *char* in large numbers and in smaller numbers on the Meghnā *chars* in the Lakhipur *thānā* and in other parts of the district. Flocks of bar-headed geese appear occasionally on the Meghnā. Wild duck are scarce, but snipe are to be had during the cold weather in the Feni sub-division. Large flocks of curlew are to be seen, and tern, cranes, many species of fish eagle, hawks, herons, and other water-fowl. A list of the birds found in the district furnished by the Collector, Mr. Porch, will be found in the statistical account of the district by Sir W. Hunter, but it is probable that many of the varieties included are very scarce, and the list is too long to repeat here. Numbers of crocodiles are found in the Meghnā, and especially on the sand banks to the west of Hātiā. Occasionally they carry off cattle, but as the people of the district rarely bathe in the big rivers few human lives are lost.

Snakes are common in Sandwīp, and no less than five varieties of the cobra are recognised in the district, *viz.*, *phānak*, *khoiā phānak*, *bankā*, *dudhgā bāhār*, and *tilakya bāhār*. Other poisonous snakes are the *sankhini* (*Bungarus fasciatus*) and the *jinglā*

borā and *urgaborā* (*Callophis macclellandii*). The *kuchaborā* (*Trimeresurens carinatus*) is less deadly. In 1908 it was reported that 50 persons and 85 head of cattle were killed by snakes. The figures are low in comparison with northern Bengal or the Dacca division. The monitor lizard, *gosāmp*, and the *girgit* or blood-sucker, are to be seen everywhere, and Mr. Porch when Collector mentioned three other species of lizard, of which one is said to attain a length of 12 feet.

Fish.

There are many species of sea and fresh water fish in the rivers, tanks, and creeks, and some account will be given later of those of economic value.* The genera best represented are the *siluridæ*, *cyprinidæ*, and *clupeadæ*, but there are many others. The saw-fish (*kharag*) is occasionally caught in the estuary.

Climate.

The district of Noākhāli is distinguished by the heaviness of its rain-fall, the evenness of its temperature, and the humidity of its atmosphere throughout the year. There are rainfall recording stations at Noākhāli, Feni, Harispur, Rāmganj, Chhāgalnāia, Hātiā, and Lakhipur, and the returns show a good deal of variation in the climate, the rainfall in the Feni sub-division and on the southern coast being decidedly heavier than in the north-west of the district.

Humidity.

Taking the district as a whole the percentage of saturation during the 12 months is 88, and only in April, when it is 82, does it fall below 85. From that time on the humidity increases steadily, reaching its maximum of 91 per cent in July and August, decreasing very slowly from then until March when it falls to 85 per cent.

Rainfall.

The normal rainfall for the twelve months is 112·22 inches, but of course there are great variations from one year to another. In 1902-03 more than 154½ inches of rain fell, while in 1908-09 there were just over 88 inches. In an ordinary year the rainy season may be said to begin in May, when it rains about one day in every three and the total fall is 10 inches. Sometimes however April is very wet, more than 15 inches fell in that month in 1902-03 and nearly 15 inches in 1893-04, while on the other hand in 1903-04 little more than 3 inches fell in the two months Apriland May. In any case in June the rains are established, and the fall in that month averages over 22 inches, increasing to 24 inches in either of the two succeeding months, and it rains practically two days out of three. Only once in eighteen years has less than 14 inches of rain been recorded in June, and that was in 1905-06, when there had been good rain in May, while the only year that shows serious deficiency during July and August is 1896-97, when only 13·3 inches fell in August, but that short fall was followed by good rain in September. In September the monsoon begins to slacken and the fall averages little more than 14 inches. Only 1895-96 shows less than 10 inches of rain in September. In October only 7½ inches of rain are to be expected and three days out of four should

---

* Page 70.

be fine, but the rainfall in this month shows considerable variations, less than an inch having fallen in 1896-97 and over 15 inches in 1893-94. In November the country is drying up, but one or two showers should give about an inch and a half. December and January are the driest months of the year and receive between them on an average less than an inch of rain. In February about an inch of rain should fall, and storms in March should give nearly 3 inches, but the rainfall at this season is quite uncertain, and there may be practically no rain or over 6 inches.

Temperature.

The normal mean temperature for the year is 77° Fahrenheit, mean maximum 84° and mean minimum 69°, the daily range averaging 15°. January is the coldest month, the mean temperature for the 24 hours being 65°, the mean maximum 77° and the minimum 53°. February brings a rise of about 3°, and March adds another 9° to the mean temperature. April brings in the real hot weather, though there is in this district no hot weather comparable with that of Hindustān, the mean temperature for the 24 hours rises to 82° with a maximum day temperature of 89° falling to 74° at night. May is the hottest month of the year, the day temperature being the same as in April, but the night warmer. In June the lowest temperature averages 77° and the maximum 87°. There is no change in the night temperatures during the three ensuing months, but the day temperature falls to 85° in July and August, rising again to 86° in September and October, but in the latter month the nights grow cooler, and in November, though the mean maximum is still 83°, the minimum has fallen to 64°. In December the mean for the 24 hours is 67° and the mean minimum is 55°.

To sum up, it may be said that the cold weather begins some time about the middle of November and lasts till the end of February. This is a pleasant time, neither too cold nor too hot, with clear skies and cool light breezes. March and April are hot, though not unpleasantly so, but from May onwards there come five months of warm, moist weather, with a daily range of temperature of less than 10 degrees, which is very trying and enervating, and would be more so, were it not for the sea-breeze which makes *pānkhās* almost superfluous. The prevailing wind is from the south-east from March till October and from the north-east from November till February.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY

Ancient History.

Youngest among all the districts in the Ganges delta Noākhāli has really no ancient history. It is probably not more than 3,000 years since first it became fit for human habitation, certainly not half so long since the Aryans entered it, but there are no records to tell us who and what manner of men they were who first settled in it and reclaimed the jungles. Possibly they were the progenitors of the present Namasudras or Chandāls, a Lohitic or Mongoloid race, who according to Mr. O'Donnel* entered Bengal from the north-east before the Koches ; or they may be represented by the Jugis,* now the principal Hindu caste of the district, whose origin is obscure, though Dr. Buchanan thought they must have come from Western India with the Pāl Rājās. Whoever they were, the early settlers had no literature and left behind nothing to tell us how or when they first took up their abode among the swamps and islands of the Meghnā. Aryan mythology gives little help. The Rāmāyan contains a description of the route to be followed by the army sent eastward in search of Sitā as far as Java and across the milky sea. Beyond the country of the Angas were to be found the lands of silkworms and silver, and mountains and cities embosomed in the sea, and tribes with 'ears like cloth hanging to their lips' and those who lived on raw fish, and islanders with tufted hair and skins the colour of gold. But there is no mention of any land or tribe that can be identified with Noākhāli or its inhabitants.

Megasthenes writing of his experiences in the third century B.C. marks the Ganges as the eastern boundary of the country of the Gangaridae, and beyond that gives us only fabulous races. Opinion generally identifies Noākhāli and the country to its north and east with the mythological kingdom of Shukhma, one of the five formed by the division of Eastern India among the sons of Bāli. Of this country we know nothing except that Kālidās in his 'Raghubangsa' describes it as "a shore green with forests of palms," and the Mahābhārata records how Bhīm coming from Monghyr, after putting to flight the monarchs of Banga, Tāmralipta, and other neighbouring countries, defeated also the "King of Shukhma and the Mlechhas who dwelt by the seashore."

Hindu settlement.

According to local tradition the first Hindu settlement dates from the twelfth century, when Biswambhar Sūr, ninth son of Rājā Adi Sūr, king of Mithilā, returning through Noākhāli from a pilgrimage to Chandranāth in the Chittagong district saw in a

---

* Report on Census of Bengal, 1891, but the features of these people are not such as are associated with Mongoloid origin.

dream the goddess Bārāhi, who promised him the sovereignty of the country if he would worship her. Obeying the goddess' demand the prince built an altar to Bārāhi Devī, but the sky being overclouded he mistook the points of the compass and placed the goat with its head to the west when offering his sacrifice. When the rays of the sun shone out, he noticed his mistake and cried out in the vernacular "bhul huā" (it was wrong) and from this exclamation the district is said to have taken the name of Bhulua. To this day the Hindus of the greater part of the district point the heads of the sacrificed goat to the west. This occurrence is said to have taken place in the year 1203 A.D., when Bakhtyār Khiliji was conquering Gaur, and it is by no means improbable that at that time some of the Hindu princes may have been driven to take refuge east of the Meghnā. There are several versions of this tale and Dr. Wise doubted the accuracy of the date* but it is probably a fact that the early Rājās of Bhulua were Kāyasths from Western Bengal.

Adi Sūr is said to have been of Rājput extraction, but it is admitted that Biswambhar or his successor married into the Kāyasth caste and at present the *Sūrs* are a Kāyasth family. Tradition assigns Kalyānpur as the first capital of Biswambhar, but the author of the 'Rājmālā' suggests Amisāpārā as a more likely place, because this village contains a temple to Bārāhi Devī and a stone image of that goddess.

The fourth descendant from Biswambhar Sūr, Srirām Khān, is said to have established the village of Srirāmpur and built there a palace, the remains of which are still to be seen. It is certainly curious to find a Kāyasth rājā with the title Khān, but it was used by the 3rd, 4th and 5th rājās in the line of descent, the 6th resuming his ancestor's patronymic 'Rāy', while his sons adopted the title of 'Mānikya' used by the Rājās of Tippera. Sūr was also a title borne by the Muhammadan Governor of Bengal in the middle of the sixteenth century, Muhammad Khān Sūr *alias* Shamsuddīn. There are still some Sūrs living in Srirampur. The descendants of Biswambhar acknowledged the suzerainty of the Rājās of Tippera, and were reckoned by them as first among their vassals and accorded the privilege of placing the royal mark or *rāj tikā* on the forehead of the Rājā of Tippera at his coronation.

Tipperas.

These Tipperas appear to be a Lohitic tribe, who coming down through the valley of the Brahmaputra settled about 1,500 years ago in the plains of Sylhet and in the northern portion of the hills of Tippera. Gradually growing in strength and extending their dominions west, south, and east, the Tipperas became by the thirteenth century overlords of the whole country from the Meghnā to Manipur, and were constantly at war with the kings of Arakan on the one side and the Muhammadan Governors of Bengal on the other.

* J. A. S. B., Vol. XLIII, p. 203 "On the Bārah Bhuiyā of Bengal."

The most famous of the Rājās of Bhulua was Lakhman Mānikya, eighth in descent from Biswambhar, who brought into the district high-class Brahmans and settled them at Srirāmpur, Kilpārā, Chapali and Barāhinagar, and was himself the author of two works in Sanskrit. He was one of the *Bārah Bhuiyas*, or twelve Lords of Bengal, and lived at the end of the sixteenth century, being a contemporary of Isā Khān of Khizrpur and of Kandarpa Nārāyan Rāy of Chandradwīp (Barisāl). Kandarpa Nārāyan died and was succeeded by his son Rāmchandra, whose youth was a subject of jest and ridicule to Lakhman Mānikya. Rumour spread the story till it reached the ears of Rāmchandra, who resolved to be revenged. Accordingly he crossed the Meghnā in his boats and invited Lakhman Mānikya to a feast, in the course of which armed men appeared and seized upon the guest who was carried off to prison in Chandradwīp and eventually put to death. Lakhman Mānikya was succeeded by his son, Balarām Rāy, who attempted to make himself independent of the Rājās of Tippera and refused to attend the coronation of Amar Mānikya in 1597 A.D. Consequently Amar Mānikya attacked Bhulua and compelled the Rājā to pay tribute.

Little is known of Balarām's successors; but in the year 1661 A.D. some Dutch sailors wrecked on the shore were hospitably entertained by a prince of Bhulua; and in 1728 we find Rājā Kīrtinārāyan recorded as zamīndār of *pargana* Bhulua.

Muhammadans.

It is difficult to say when the Muhammadans first entered the district of Noākhāli. In the year 1279 A.D. Muhammad Tughral aided Ratnaphā, afterwards known as Ratna Mānikya, to obtain the throne of Tippera, and it is probable that the earliest Muhammadan settlements in Noākhāli date from that time.

In the year 1347 Iliās Shāh *alias* Shamsuddīn, the Muhammadan Governor at Sonārgāon, attacked and defeated Rājā Pratāp Mānikya of Tippera and carried off a large booty in money and elephants, but obtained no permanent footing in the country. He also conquered Chittagong which appears to have remained in the possession of the Muhammadans for some time. When Ibn Batūta* visited it about the year 1350 A.D., Chittagong acknowledged the suzerainty of the Bengal governors, but after that it lapsed into the possession of the Arakanese and was taken from them in 1513 by the Rājā of Tippera.

Fakiruddīn Mubārak of Sonārgāon, the founder of the independent line of Muhammadan kings, about the year 1340 carried his banner to the north into Sylhet, to the east into Tippera and Noākhāli, and to the south into Chittagong. These Muhammadan raids seem to have been to a great exte due to a desire to obtain elephants, for which Tippera was famous, and to put a

* So says Babu Kailash Chandra Singh, but it seems more probable that the place which Ibn Batūta calls Sātkāwān or Sutirkāwān was Sātgāon (Chatgāon) on the Hooghly.

stop to them Rājā Dharma Mānikya who ruled in the first half of the fifteenth century attacked and took Sonārgāon, the Muhammadan capital. At the beginning of the sixteenth century there was a struggle between Tipperas, Muhammadans, and Arakanese for the possession of Chittagong. At first the former were successful. Husain Shāh, Governor of Bengal, then invaded Tippera. In two campaigns he was defeated by the Tipperas, who dammed the Gumti and flooded the country as the enemy approached, but making a third attempt Husain Shāh fortified a strong position at Kailār Garh and in the battle that followed was victorious, and thereafter assumed the title of conqueror of Kāmrup, Karnata and Jājnagar (Tippera). He does not appear to have retained a permanent hold on Noākhāli or Tippera, and must soon have lost Chittagong, which was taken by Rājā Deb Mānikya of Tippera from the Maghs in 1513 A.D., though it was not long before it was retaken by Sultan Nāsiruddīn. From this time onwards the Afghāns began to establish themselves on the east of the Meghnā.

In 1587 A.D., the country was overrun by the King of Arakan, and as late as 1610 A.D., we find the Arakanese aiding the pirate chief of Sandwīp to prevent the entry of the Mughals into Bhulua and invading the country by sea and land.

At this point it is necessary to turn to the history of the islands. *Sandwīp.*

The centre of Sandwīp is believed to have been inhabited before the adjoining mainland, and Cesare Federico* the Venetian traveller who visited it about the year 1569 A.D., stated that the island was one of the most fertile places in the world, densely populated and well cultivated. He describes the inhabitants as Moors (Muhammadans) and found the island in possession of a Muhammadan governor, and it is known that in 1609 A.D., one Fateh Khān was governor of the island and had a strong Muhammadan garrison, besides a fleet of forty sail. According to the Portuguese historians Sandwīp had been before that a Portuguese possession and Fateh Khān had seized it on the death of its governor Manoel de Mattos and had murdered all the Christians on the island.

About the year 1605 one Sebastiao Gonzales Tibao, a Portuguese of obscure extraction, came to India, and two years later, having made a little money in the salt trade, carried a cargo to Dianga, a port in the kingdom of Arakan, and was there when the Portuguese residents were massacred by the king's orders. *Portuguese in Sandwīp.*

Some few, including Gonzales, escaped in ten vessels and turned pirates, robbing in the ports of Arakan, and carrying their booty to Bhatkal on the Malabar coast, with whose ruler they were on friendly terms.

Fateh Khān sent his fleet against this set of robbers and found them off the island of Dakhin Shāhbazpur, but in the battle

* Voyage and travel of M. Caesar Fredericke: Hakluyt's Voyages.

which followed the Muhammadan fleet was entirely destroyed, and Fateh Khān himself was killed. After this the pirates elected Gonzales as their chief, and being joined by numbers of their countrymen determined to establish themselves in Sandwīp. Gonzales entered into a contract with the King of Bhatkal to give the latter half the revenues of Sandwīp in return for his assistance in taking it. The king sent some ships and 200 horsemen, and Gonzales having collected a fleet of forty sail manned by 400 Portuguese, attacked the island. The Muhammadans offered a vigorous defence and the issue was in doubt until the captain of a Spanish ship landed fifty men with whose aid the Portuguese captured the fort, and thereafter put to death more than a thousand of the Muhammadan garrison.

Once established in Sandwīp, Gonzales broke faith with the Rājā of Bhatkal and declined to give him the promised share of the revenues. Sandwīp was then an important centre of trade, and Gonzales erected a custom house and increasing rapidly in wealth and power found himself in command of 1,000 Portuguese, 2,000 well armed natives, 200 horse, and more than eighty vessels provided with good cannon. He married the sister of the King of Arakan, and entered into a treaty with that monarch for the defence of Sandwīp against the Mughals, who, says the historian, then contemplated the conquest of Bhulua.

The King of Arakan sent by land a force of some 90,000 men, mostly musketeers, and 700 elephants, and despatched by sea a fleet of 200 vessels, carrying 4,000 men, which was to join with Gonzales' fleet and be under his command. As usual Gonzales played false, and having taken the combined fleet into one of the island creeks, invited on board his vessel all the captains of the ships belonging to Arakan, had them murdered, and thereafter killed or enslaved the crews and returned to Sandwīp with all the ships. On land the forces of Arakan were defeated after a fierce struggle and the king escaped with only a few followers to the fort of Chittagong. As soon as he heard of the defeat of his ally Gonzales set out with his fleet, plundering and destroying the forts along the coast of Arakan, apparently to avenge the murder of the Portuguese at Dianga two years before. But he failed in an attack on the capital and the expedition bore no other fruit than the ruin of his reputation.

In the year 1616 Gonzales who had hitherto professed himself an independent sovereign, offered to become a tributary to Portugal and to pay a galleon load of rice yearly as tribute if the Viceroy of Goa would assist him in an attack on Arakan. Tempted by this offer and in the hope of obtaining the vast treasure supposed to belong to the King of Arakan, the Viceroy fitted out a fleet under Don Francisco, who sailed to Arakan, and was joined by Gonzales with fifty vessels well equipped. The combined fleets sailed up the river but were defeated by the Arakanese, supported by some Dutch vessels. Gonzales withdrew to Sandwīp, but not long after-

wards the King of Arakan captured the island and put an end to the Portuguese dominion. Many of the Portuguese were transferred to Chittagong to serve as gunners and sailors against the growing power of the Muhammadans, and for the next half century the coasts of Bengal were ravaged by Portuguese and Magh pirates from Chittagong.

Pirates of Chittagong.

Many are the tales told of the fierceness and cruelty of these robbers, and how the whole countryside would tremble at the cry of 'the Magh! the Magh!' that told of their approach. Surprising the villagers in their homes or at their markets, they would carry off men, women and children, holding some to ransom, and keeping the rest as slaves, either to sell them to the Portuguese of Goa or Ceylon and other places, or forcibly converting them to Christianity to train them up as rowers in their own serviee. Bernier says that by their ravages large tracts were depopulated, and, though he may have overstated the case, there can be no doubt that the constant terror of attack must have driven away settlers from the coast even if the numbers killed and enslaved were not sufficient to make so great an impression.

Dilāl Khān

European writers speak of the pirates as Christians in the service of the Arakanese, but it appears that piracy at the mouth of the Meghnā was by no means confined to these people but was shared largely by the Muhammadans themselves. It was in the first half of the seventeenth century that Dilāl Khān, the famous bandit chief, arose. This man is said to have been the son of a woman who with her child was wrecked on the shore of Sandwīp. This child, left lying on the beach, was shielded from the sun's rays by a cobra. This fact, of course, marked him for a great destiny, and being brought up with the prospect before him he ultimately became the ruler of the island and a renowned robber. He is still the popular hero of Sandwīp and many strange tales are told of his powers, for like a second Robin Hood he plundered the wealthy and the stranger, and protected and was generous to his own people and the poor. He was an arbitrary ruler too, and had curious theories on the improvement of the race. The Hindu system of marriage within the caste he considered utterly pernicious, and he laid it down as a rule that the fair should wed with the fair irrespective of caste or even of creed; hence there is found to this day a strange medley of Hidnu and Muhammadan names, and the Hindus of the mainland, be they of high caste or of low, have no social intercourse with those of Sandwīp. Even in the genealogical table of the zamindārs we find a Kāyasth family connected by marriage with their Muhammadan neighbours.

Dilāl seems to have kept on good terms with both Mughals and Maghs for some years, and in 1639 exchanged presents with Shāh Shujā. At this time the Mughals had a garrison at Bhulua, and from the year 1620 onwards they had maintained an outpost at Noākhāli to guard the mouth of the *Khāl* there, but the Muhammadan soldiers were no match on the water for the pirates,

who in their light galleys swept the whole coast, and often penetrated forty miles inland up the mouth and branches of the Meghnā. It was principally to relieve the country of this pest and to check the growing power and insolence of Arakan that Nawāb Shaista Khān, who was appointed Governor of Bengal in the year 1664, transferred his capital to Dacca. He fitted out a large fleet and equipped an army of 13,000 men; and, after strengthening the posts at Bhulua and Noākhāli, sent the fleet with 3,000 troops and some European gunners under the command of Husain Beg to clear the river of the pirates. Husain Beg took by storm the forts of Jagdia and Alamgīrnagar at the mouth of the river, which were in the possession of the King of Arakan. Dilāl Khān was ordered to assist in watching the river, and as he refused to do so, a detachment under Abul Husain landed in Sandwīp and besieged Dilāl in his fort. Dilāl fled to the jungles, where he collected a fresh force, and as at this time a party of Arakanese came to his assistance, Abul Husain withdrew to Noākhāli. Husain Beg then sailed to Sandwīp, and after some difficulty succeeded in expelling the Arakanese from their strong stockades and in capturing Dilāl, who with 92 members of his family was sent to Dacca where he ended his days in confinement.

Abdul Karim Khān was then appointed to the command of Sandwīp with a garrison of 1,000 men. Shaista Khān's ultimate objective at that time was Chittagong, but before attacking it he opened negotiations with the commandant of the Dutch Colony of Batavia and tried also by threats and cajolery to detach the Portuguese from the service of Arakan, offering them, if they would enter his service, more advantageous terms than they were receiving from their present chief and lands for the settlement of their families in Bengal, and warning them that if they adhered to the cause of Arakan he would, on the capture of Chittagong, put to death every one of them. Bernier says that the Nawāb adopted the expedient of getting the Portuguese in Bengal to transmit letters to their co-religionists in Chittagong containing promises of reward if they would come over to the Mughal side; and that these letters were intercepted and handed to the King of Arakan, who was thus made to believe that the Portuguese intended treachery.

In the Storia do Mogor another version of this tale is given, and it is said that Antonio de Rego of Hughly undertook for a bribe of Rs. 75,000 to procure the betrayal of Chittagong to the Mughal. Anyhow the Portuguese, who were already in trouble at Chittagong over the murder of a relative of the Rājā, deserted to the Nawāb, by whom they were graciously received and treated with better faith and generosity than they deserved.

The descendants of the Portuguese adventurers are still to be seen in Sandwīp and elsewhere in the district, but there is nothing in their features or complexion to distinguish them from the natives. From this time forward Sandwīp was a Mughal dependency

Nawārā Mahāls.

For the protection of trade and to guard against the incursions of the Maghs and other foreign pirates, Shaista Khān organised a fleet of 768 armed boats stationed principally at Dacca. The whole cost of maintaining and manning the fleet, including the wages of 923 Firingi or Portuguese sailors, came to over eight lakhs of rupees, assessed on 112 *mahāls*, known as the Nawārā Mahāls, each of which was compelled to furnish a certain number of boats. It is not clear, however, that this fleet was actually maintained under Shaista Khān's successors, and it is certain that up to the time when Bengal came under the rule of the East India Company, life and property were not safe on the great rivers. In February 1717, says the East India Chronicle of 1758, the Maghs carried off from the most southern parts of Bengal 1,800 men, women, and children, and took them to the King of Arakan who chose all the handicraftsmen and about a fourth of the rest for himself and returned the rest to their capturers to be sold into slavery. So serious indeed were the depredations of the dacoits—"a race of outlaws," to quote Warren Hastings, "who live from father to son in a state of warfare against society, plundering and burning villages and murdering the inhabitants"—that the regulations of 1772 condemned every dacoit to death and his family to perpetual slavery; and in 1789 the construction of boats of the descriptions known as *luckās*, *jelkars*, and *paunchways* of certain dimensions was forbidden, except with the license of the Magistrate.

Slavery.

Nor did slavery cease until very much later. In a report on Sandwīp, dated 22nd September 1879, Mr. Duncan gives the following account of slavery as it then existed in the island:—

"This unfortunate race of mankind bear in Sandwīp a larger proportion to the other inhabitants than perhaps in any other district in the province, there being hardly a house-holder however otherwise indigent that has not at least one and the majority many in their families. This number also very soon increased by marriage to which they are encouraged by their masters, the custom of the country being such that on a free woman's marrying a male slave, she by that act reduces herself and family to be the perpetual slaves of her husband's master who also continuing ever after to retain him, her and their heirs in the same perpetual bondage, they soon became numerous. I have been assured that Abutorāb, the late rebel Chowdry, had more than fifteen hundred slaves, heads of families and whom he distributed in separate houses which he allotted them to live in. This multitude in Sandwīp proceeds principally from the cheapness and plenty of grain it annually produces, which as often as there is any scarcity in the other Dacca districts attracts people to Sandwīp, where on such occasions it has been common for many of them to sell themselves and their posterity for a bare maintenance. In a place where slavery is so prevalent, there will always be some

cases of hardship, such as undue and most oppressive acquisitions by pretended purchase, children enticed away and deluded to sell themselves for the merest trifle before they arrive at years of discretion. On the whole, however, I only set free fifteen slaves and their families at liberty if they had any and got the matter compromised between four others and their masters, yet no part of my proceedings created more general apprehensions than my taking cognisance of this particular part of Sandwīvian grievances, because all the principal people were immediately interested; there being probably many of their slaves whom they acquired and hold in a manner that could hardly bear the test of regular trial; they therefore endeavoured, as I heard, to keep them at home, so that it was only a few perhaps who by accident making their escape gained access to complain to me, which must account for a much greater number not having been heard and redressed; since I uniformly set free all these on the Bill of Sale or Title Deed of whose purchase there was proven to be any defect arising from either the parties having been sold when young by persons not entitled by the custom of the country so to dispose of them, or from children's having been unduly decoyed away from the parents and made slaves or by selling themselves when very young."

And that slavery was not peculiar to Sandwīp appears from a letter written in the year 1790 regarding the prevalence of the practice of selling children, though this related to *parganas* which now form part of the Tippera district. There are no records to show how the practice was stamped out. Indeed the Company recognised slavery and ordered its officers to try cases regarding slaves according to the law of the land, and it was not until 1811 that the importation of slaves from foreign countries was prohibited, and not until 1832 that the sale of persons into slavery was made a crime, but there is no reason to suppose that it caused much misery, for it is recorded "that slaves are treated as the children of the families to which they belong."

Noākhāli under Mughal Government.

From the time of Shaista Khān onwards, Noākhāli and the islands were treated as part of the Mughal dependency, and though Tippera was not subjugated until the eighteenth century, it seems probable that Bhulua was severed from it long before.

In the reorganisation of the fiscal divisions of the Mughal empire made in the year 1722, both the mainland and the islands, as well as Sarkār Udaipur, comprising the estates of the Rājā of Tippera in the east of the district, were included in Chakla Jahāngīrnagar in the province or *Niābat* of Dacca.

Shamsher Ghāzi.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century the Rājās of Tippera appear to have had little to do with the affairs of Bhulua and their history belongs more properly to the adjoining district of Tippera, but the story of the rise and revolt of Shamsher Ghāzi may well be told here. Shamsher Ghāzi was the son of a poor Muhammadan of *pargana* Dakhinsik in Chakla Roshnābād, who

being brought up with the sons of the local *tālukdār*, Nāsir Muhammad, and gifted with exceptional intelligence and strength, dared to aspire to the hand of the *tālukdār's* daughter. Naturally the *tālukdār* refused and would have punished Shamsher for his presumption, but the latter fled to the woods, and collecting there a number of followers attacked and killed Nāsir and his sons and took his daughter to wife. The Rājā sent soldiers against him, and Shamsher made his peace with the Vizier and obtained the zamīndāri of the *pargana* and afterwards took *pargana* Meherkul in farm. On the death of Bijay Mānikya there was a struggle between different claimants for the succession to the *rāj*, and Shamsher took advantage of this to refuse payment of rent. He defeated the soldiers sent against him and finally attacked the Rājā's capital of Udaypur with a force of 6,000 men and sacked it. From that day Udaypur has been abandoned, and is now overgrown with jungles. For a short time Shamsher Ghāzi was practically ruler of the plains, and was acknowledged even by few of the hillsmen. He appointed a manager to each *pargana* and gave lands to many of his relations and excavated tanks in many villages. Yet it is said he could not abandon his old robber-habits and would at times plunder the houses of the rich and distribute his booty among the poor. At length the heir designate Krishna Mānikya appealed to Mīr Kāsim, who recognised him as Rājā of Tippera, and sent a force against Shamsher, who was captured and carried off to prison in Murshidābād, and soon after was put to death.

As early as 1756 A.D. the East India Company established factories for the weaving of cloth at Jagdia at the mouth of the Feni, but it was not until 1765 that the *dīwāni*, or authority over the revenues of Bengal, including the present district of Noākhāli, was conferred in perpetuity on the Company. First British settlements.

When the Company first took over the *dīwāni* of Bengal, they hesitated to stand forth themselves as direct collectors of the revenue, and up till 1769 left the administration in the hands of the native Naib or Deputy Dīwān at Murshidābād. In that year supervisors were appointed to enquire into the history of the province, its rental and revenue, the character and productiveness of its lands, its commerce, and the system of justice, and to make recommendations for its better management; and in 1772 the Board of Directors announced their intention of standing forth as *Dīwān* and by the agency of the Company's servants taking upon themselves the entire care and management of the revenues. In pursuance of this policy they divided the whole province into districts, appointing to the charge of each a European Collector aided by a native *Dīwān*. *Pargana* Sandwīp and its dependencies were under the Chief at Chittagong, who seems also to have exercised some authority over Tippera (comprising the present *thānā* Chhāgalnaia) though this was in the

immediate charge of a Resident. The other islands at the mouth of the Meghnā were under Bākarganj and the rest of the mainland of Noākhāli was included in the Dacca district or province. Some time later Bhulua became a district and in the year 1787 A.D. there were a Collector and an Assistant Collector there. In that year, on the recommendation of Sir John Shore, the district was placed under the Collector of Mymansingh. This arrangement continued until the year 1790, when the whole of the mainland of Noākhāli was included in the district of Tippera then formed. The *pargana* of Bhulua, however, was in the immediate charge of Mr. Dandridge, who had been deputed there to partition the property. He seems to have been an assistant to the Collector of Tippera, but his position was ill-defined, and he interfered constantly in many matters that brought him into conflict with the salt agents and heads of the factories, and drew down upon him reprimands from higher authorities. This partition occupied Mr. Dandridge for three years, and at the end of that time the co-sharers refused to accept his award, and then Mr. Thompson was deputed to the district for a while. After that it seems to have come under the direct administration of the Collector of Tippera.

Sandwīp. The pargana of Sandwīp had for a long time been held by several *chaudhuris*, who paid their respective quota of the revenue to an *ahdādār** who was a sort of contractor for the revenue and delegate of the Provincial Government. In the year 1763 the *ahdā* of Sandwīp was farmed by a society or partnership, which was registered in the name of one Bishun Charan Bose, though the directing member was really Gokul Ghosāl, who became the banyan of Mr. Verelst, the Governor of Bengal, and was the founder of the well-known Bhukailāsh family. The oppressive conduct of the *ahdādārs* led to a rebellion in 1767, which was quelled without difficulty by Captain Nollikins and a small force, and Gokul Ghosāl took advantage of this circumstance to obtain the confiscation of the property of some of the *chaudhuris* and to get it into his own hands.† Subsequently by threats and ill-treatment he forced others to sell their property until nearly the whole island had come into his possession. The complaints of the dispossessed *chaudhuris* finally came to the cognisance of the Dīwān, and in 1770 A.D. one of them was reinstated, and on the appointment of Collectors in 1772 A.D. the office of *ahdādār* was abolished. Gokul Ghosāl, however, and Bishun Charan Bose remained in possession of most of the island, and the former's position served for some time to prevent com-

* This means simply 'officer,' but is perhaps the same as *wahadādār*, a name given to the elected chiefs of the little village of Shella in the Khāsi hills.

† Paras. 130—133 of Mr. Duncan's report. It is a curious fact that Mr. Duncan was unable to find any authority for Captain Nollikins' action and it seems questionable whether there really was any rebellion.

plaints from reaching the ears of the authorities. At last in 1778 A.D. the Board of Revenue deputed Mr. Duncan to enquire into certain definite charges against the late *ahdādārs* and generally into the state of affairs in the island, and he submitted an interesting but very prolix report, which throws much light on the condition of the country and people. At the close of this enquiry Mr. Duncan urged that a European officer should be kept in charge of Sandwīp. The Governor did not accept this recommendation, but in 1790 a Mr. Booth had to be deputed as a Special Commissioner for the settlement of disputes, and a Mr. Rawlins was sent there to survey it about the same time; after that too it appears that special officers were sent there from time to time. In 1808 a Mr. Paton surveyed the islands and *chars*, in 1814 Mr. Tucker was deputed to enquire into a number of disputes over the salt lands and the alluvial formations in the Meghnā, and in 1817 serious disturbances led to Mr. Walter, Registrar of Chittagong, being deputed to the island. In his report submitted in the following year, Mr. Walter laid much stress on the inconvenience of the divided jurisdiction in the islands, some being under Chittagong, some under Tippera, and some under Bākarganj, and on the impossibility of proper supervision from stations so far away. From a letter of the 14th May 1811 it appears that "Bāmni and other *chars*" had then recently been transferred from Chittagong district to Tippera, but Sandwīp and Hātia continued to form part of the district of Chittagong until the year 1821.*

Formation of the district of Noākhāli.

In 1820 a Calaries Committee sat to investigate complaints of the inconvenience arising out of the position of the Salt Agent at Noākhāli, and recommended that he should be invested with certain executive powers.† Mr. Plowden, then Salt Agent, represented that any such encroachment on the province of the Collector must entail friction and that it would be better to form a new district and make him its Collector. In the upshot the Board concurred, and in 1821 Mr. Plowden was appointed in addition to his duties as Salt Agent to be Collector of Bhulua with jurisdiction over lands taken from the neighbouring districts, and comprising approximately the present mainland and islands of Noākhāli together with Dakhin Shāhbāzpur on the west of the Meghnā. In 1868 the district began to be known as Noākhāli. In 1869 Dakhin Shāhbāzpur was transferred to Bākarganj district. By a notification, dated 31st May 1875, the boundary between Tippera and Noākhāli was re-laid, 78 villages containing an area of 43 square miles going

* In 1786 the *Taraf* Bhawāni Charan Dās in *pargana* Sandwīp was placed under the Collector of Bhulua, but this did not affect magisterial jurisdiction.

† The report is not forthcoming, but this much appears from the correspondence. Calary was the common term for a salt factory.

from Tippera to Noākhāli and 22 villages comprising nearly 13 square miles from Noākhāli to Tippera. In 1876 the Feni sub-division was formed, and *thānās* Chhāgalnaia of Tippera and Mirkāsarāi of Chittagong district were included in it; but the latter was re-transferred to Chittagong in 1878. The last revision of the boundaries was in 1881 when the Feni river was made the boundary between Noākhāli and Chittagong and four villages comprising an area of about four square miles were transferred to the former.

Divisional Commissioners.

In 1829 when Commissioners were first appointed to relieve the Board of Revenue and the Judges of some of their duties and the province was parcelled out among them, Noākhāli was assigned to the division of the Commissioner of Chittagong, and has remained so ever since.

Administration of justice.

In the year 1772 the East India Company established in each district two courts, the civil or *dīwāni* court over which the Collector presided aided by the native *dīwān* and other officers, and the *faujdāri* or criminal court presided over by the *kāzi* and *mufti* aided by two *maulavis*, who administered Muhammadan law. The Collector, however, supervised the proceedings of the criminal court, procured the attendance of witnesses, and executed its sentences. In 1775 the magisterial functions of the Collectors were transferred to native officers known as *faujdārs*. This system did not work well, and in 1781 A. D. the civil courts of the districts, other than Chittagong and a few others, were placed under separate judges who were invested with power to apprehend offenders and commit them for trial before the *daroga* of the nearest *faujdāri*; this being for Noākhāli mainland that at Mymensingh.

In 1787 the head of each district was invested with revenue, civil, and criminal powers, but three years later the system was again modified, and a Judge-Magistrate as well as a Collector was appointed to each district. As a civil court the Judge could try all suits arising within the district, subject to certain exceptions in favour of European British subjects, who were, however, required to agree to submit themselves to the jurisdiction of the local courts as a condition of being allowed to live more than ten miles from the Presidency. As Magistrate, the Judge could arrest offenders and try them for misdemeanours and minor crimes, the law being laid down by the Muhammadan law officers.

Thus in 1790 the Judge-Magistrate of Tippera exercised criminal and civil jurisdiction on the mainland, and the Chief of Chittagong in the islands, while serious criminal trials were conducted and appeals heard before the Court of Appeal and Circuit for the Dacca Division. As no Judge was appointed to the district of Bhulua on its formation in 1821, the jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases remained unaltered—Dakhin Shāhbāzpur being under the Judge of Barisāl; but the assistant

to the Salt Agent was vested with the powers of a Joint Magistrate and placed in immediate charge of the police and criminal administration and seems to have acted to most intents as District Magistrate until in 1832, on the amalgamation of judicial and executive functions, the Collector became Magistrate. It is curious that the Joint Magistrate was called the "Joint Magistrate at Noākhāli" though the name of the district was Bhulua. In 1877 A. D. the district of Noākhāli was made a civil and sessions division and a separate Judge appointed.

Law and order in early days.

The following extract from Mr. Duncan's report on Sandwīp describes the system of administration of justice as it existed in that island before the East India Company took the responsibility:—

"The administration of justice was anciently conducted as to matters of meum and tuum under the authority of the Fauzdar, formerly resident in Sandwīp whence may be derived its late and (in some measure) current name of the Fauzdāry or Fauzedāry adālat. After the Government discontinued to maintain a fortress in Sandwīp and the consequent removal of the Fauzdār, justice was, it is said, carried on by the Daroga or officer appointed for that purpose; but, if not before, this Daroga is known to have from about the year 1760 acted entirely under the authority of the Naib Ahdādār who used on fixed days of the week to sit in the *adālat*, and attended by the Daroga, the Kānungo and the Zamīndār to settle causes which had been made ready for hearing by the Daroga and his assistants.

"The court took equally cognizance of all matters civil and criminal, its jurisdiction being only restrained as to matters of revenue, the cognizance of which rested with the Ahdādār in his separate capacity. The Zamīndārs affirm that their pargana was not included in the general Fauzdāri jurisdiction of the Province. In matters of debt this court retained the fourth of the sum litigated and exacted discretionary fines for theft, dacoity, fornication, assault and the like. Till the year 1171 (1764) it was customary to exact for the emolument of the Ahdādār an *Estāk** of 1½ annas per diem from the parties together with 1 anna for the peon who had then in his charge; but this *Estak* being abolished, the peon fee was augmented to 1½ anna which is now the current rate of the pargana.

"These articles composed a fund for defraying the charges of the court and its officers besides which 300 or 400 rupees had under the appellation of Fauzdāri been since 1170 settled as the Jamā or Government rental of this *mehal* and annexed to the taxes or general revenue of the pargana after the expenditure on which two accounts the residue was paid towards the Ahdādār's *Khansamany* or private account."

---

* Probably "Itlāk." This and all similar exactions were prohibited by the Regulations of the 15th August 1772.

Other abuses not unknown in Bengal at the present day appear to have been rife at that time. Frivolous and false complaints were a common weapon for the satisfaction of private grudges, so much so that while the Regulations of 1772 provided only a pecuniary penalty in such cases, in 1780 it was found necessary to empower the courts to award corporal punishment when the gravity of the offence required it. Another device, often resorted to by refractory *zamīndārs* to get rid of officers sent by the Collector to take possession of their estates, was to summon persons they wished to annoy to appear before the civil court, as witnesses in a case in which they had really no concern, thus giving them a needless journey to Dacca or Calcutta.

The report also brings out strongly the difficulties experienced by officers in those days in regulating their procedure. Forgery, we learn, was extremely common, and perjury the general rule. Hindus of good caste professed to be debarred from taking an oath, and apparently considered it by no means incumbent on them to speak the truth without it.

The technicalities of Muhammadan law seem also to have conduced to the failure of justice, for Mr. Duncan tells of a case in which a salt watcher was resisted in the execution of his duty, and on his attempting to carry out his object by force was killed. The case was clear, but the *maulavis* ruled that the circumstances did not bring the killing under any express head of the Muhammadan law, and the man was acquitted; though one learned officer appears to have suggested that the act might be punishable as a contempt of Government.

From 1772 onwards as experience was obtained rules were made to meet the difficulties and promote the ends of justice, and these were finally amplified and consolidated into Regulations IV and IX of 1793, which, while according recognition to the impropriety of administering oaths to certain classes of persons, made their evidence relevant, modified the application of Muhammadan law, and abolished mutilation as a punishment.*

Difficulties of administrations.

The correspondence of these early years is very incomplete, but such as it is serves to throw some light on the difficulties under which the administrators laboured. There were continual complaints of the refractory and turbulent character of the *zamīndārs* and *tālukdārs* of the district. *Pargana* Ambarābād in particular was a constant source of trouble. The *zamīndārs* having refused to engage for the *jamā* of Rs. 50,000 proposed, the Collector had been directed to take possession and collect the rents. He protested representing the impossibility of obtaining any reliable account of the assets or of realising rents from the tenure-holders. "The *talukdārs*," said he, "had in the first instance

* For a further account of the difficulties the reader is referred to Mr. Warren Hasting's letter of the 3rd August 1773 and other papers reprinted at page 114 of Colebrooke's Supplement to the Bengal Regulations. Space prevents a further account here of the growth of the present judicial system.

secreted their *patwāris* and falsified their accounts, inaependent of which they had delivered *pattas* to their *ryats* at an inferior rate to that of the village with the view of diminishing their assets during the period their land was held *khāss*." The Board, however, insisted, and *sazāwāls* were appointed and *amīns* deputed, but even so, the most rigorous measures failed at first. Two years later, however, the *pargana* was settled at a revenue of Rs. 95,631, nearly double that originally proposed, and the Board of Revenue wrote a characteristic letter to Sir John Shore emphasising the success of their postponement of the permanent settlement of the estate. In not a few instances the Collector's orders were treated with contempt and his peons beaten, and eventually he had to resort to the practice of borrowing the Judge's *chaprāsis*, who, apparently, commanded more respect. Some idea of the confusion then prevailing may be gathered from the fact that in 1793, *parganas* Bābupur, Dandra, Allahābād, Ambarābād and Jagdia, and part of Torah were held *khāss* for various reasons. One of the *zamīndārs* of Dandra and Allahābād was in prison on a multiplicity of charges, including murder and attempted rape; and many of his fellows seem to have been little better. Sandwīp was as bad, and as late as 1810 the Collector of Islāmābād (Chittagong) wrote to the Board before deputing an *amīn* there "as in a dispute of such a nature affrays of a serious nature frequently take place in this zillah."

Less is heard of these difficulties in the later correspondence, but the following extract from Mr. Plowden's letter of the 28th October 1821, regarding the formation of the district of Bhulua shows that there had not been much real improvement:— "Such is the turbulent and depraved character of the natives in the district in question that without the appointment of an active magisterial officer to aid my operations I must candidly state to your Board that I have not the most distant hope of carrying into effect one single object of my appointment. The local experience and information I possess has satisfied me that the populous inhabitants of the Chars have from the absence of all control, by the habitual resort to violence for the settlement of their dispute and adjustment of their grievances whether real or pretended, become a most lawless race of men, and that it is impossible to hope under such circumstances any advancement of success can attend my revenue proceedings unless I have the aid of a Joint Magistrate expressly appointed for the superintendence of the police jurisdiction of the same expanse of the country as that over which my revenue jurisdiction will extend. Indeed, not only the settlement of the Char lands, but the general state of the country calls for some measure of this kind. The very great distance, at least 80 miles of that part of the country in the neighbourhood of the Salt Agent's official residence and of the islands from the Sadar stations of the several

Magistrates, precludes all possibility of a vigilant and active superintendence of the police. The distress felt by the poorer class of people, the cruelties daily practised, and the murders and robberies that constantly take place, loudly call for that protection which the inhabitants of these districts are at present almost entirely denied. It is in my power to adduce instances to your Board of the most daring robberies, the most barbarous cruelties and the most atrocious murders that have recently occurred in this part of the country." Shortly before this was written a party containing two Europeans had been attacked, and one of them killed and another wounded, while two other Europeans wrecked on a *char* in the Meghnā had a narrow escape.

Disturbances.

After the outbreak in Sandwīp in the year 1767 which necessitated the despatch of troops to the island, the peace of the district was never disturbed by aggression from without. Even in November 1857 when the Mutiny was at its height and mutineers from Chittagong were marching through Hill Tippera, the Collector was able to report that his district was quiet and peaceful. On the 31st January 1860 a large body of Kukis from the mountain fastnesses at the back of the Tippera hills burst suddenly into the plains of Chhāgalnaia, which is now in the Noākhāli district but was then part of Tippera, murdered 185 British subjects and carried off about 100 captives. Troops and police were hurried to the spot, but the Kukis had only remained a day or two in the plains, retreating to the hills and jungles by the way they had come, and since then have given no trouble.

Currency.

The currency was a constant source of worry and confusion owing to the various denominations of rupees in circulation, and the early correspondence is full of references to this subject. In 1766 the Board of Directors endeavoured to establish the coinage upon a gold basis, but the experiment was abandoned before long. In 1788 we find the accounts kept in terms of both *sikka* and *dusmussa* rupees, and in 1790 the Collector complained that while the *zamīndārs* paid their revenue in *sikka* rupees, they made their *mufasal* collections in *Arcot* rupees.

The Regulations of October 1792 recognised 27 different varieties of rupees in circulation, all of which were to be accepted in payment of Government dues up till April 1794, after which only *sikka* rupees of the Company's coinage were to be legal tender. The *sikka* rupee was finally abolished in 1836 A.D. when the Company's rupee became the only legal tender. Copper coinage dates from 1781 when *faloos* and half and quarter *faloos* were coined, the *faloos* being equal to 80 *cowries* or one-sixty-fourth of a *sikka* rupee, and the largest copper coin, being the *madosie*, at 32 to the rupee.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

Census of 1872.

The first reliable census of the inhabitants was taken in 1872 and showed a population of 713,934, living in an area of 1,577 square miles. The general feeling among the people was strongly opposed to the census, and in one instance when the operations were about to begin, a large party of villagers assembled with sticks, assaulted the supervisor and threw him into a tank. The Assistant Superintendent of Police went to the supervisor's assistance and was himself mobbed, beaten and severely injured. It was said that the inhabitants of the district regarded the census simply as a stepping-stone to additional taxation, and, according to another version, the idea among many of them was that the 'General Saheb' wanted to see the women of a particular age and that they were to be sent to Calcutta for the purpose. No one knows who was meant by the General, but it shows how ignorant the people were and how little likely to give any help to the enumerators. Nevertheless, the Collector of the district expressed his belief in the general completeness and accuracy of the return and there seems no reason to doubt it; but even in 1891 there was a widespread idea among the people that the census was but a precursor of additional taxation.

Census of 1881.

In 1881, when the second census was taken, the population was found to have decreased by 2·14 per cent. The sole and sufficient reason was the terrible loss of life in the cyclone of 1876, in which over 36,000 persons are believed to have been drowned, while another 49,000 were swept away by the epidemic of cholera that ensued. Most of the deaths were in the *thānās* of Hātiā, Begamganj and Sandwīp, in which the numbers of inhabitants in 1881 were respectively 25·58, 15·54, and 16·72 per cent less than in 1872. In the rest of the *sadr* subdivision there was an increase, and that there was none in Feni and Chhāgalnaia seems to have been due to the absence of a good many men who had gone to collect forest produce in Hill Tippera. Since then the recovery of the district has been rapid and uninterrupted.

Censuses of 1891 and 1901

The prosperity of the decade preceding 1891 was practically unbroken, but in 1893 there was a cyclone, which did not cause directly much loss of life, but destroyed a great part of the ripening harvest, wrecked nearly half the betel-nut palms, drowned a large number of cattle, and was followed by an outbreak of cholera. The people had hardly recovered when a blight fell upon the betel-nut trees, which died by thousands, and the early cessation

of the rains in 1896 damaged the harvest and occasioned a good deal of distress. Yet, in spite of these unfavourable conditions, there was not one year in which the recorded deaths numbered more than the births. The increase in the population between 1881 and 1891 was 23 per cent. In 1901 the population was 1,141,728, showing a further increase of 13·1 per cent, and the only local area which in either period failed to show a substantial advance is the Companyganj independent outpost (formerly known as Bāmni *thānā*), of which a great part has of recent years been washed away by the Bāmni river. Elsewhere the increase in the last decade has been least in Sudharām *thānā*, which has been losing land along its southern face, and in Chhāgalnaia which has 1,033 inhabitants to the square mile, a very high figure for a purely rural area, and has probably lost a good many emigrants to Hill Tippera.

The growth of the population in the western *thānās* is remarkable, most of all in the case of Rāmganj in the extreme north-west, which in the last three decades has shown advances of 27·25, 23·06, and 20·04 per cent, and had in 1901 no less than 1,023 inhabitants to the square mile. "The cause," said the Magistrate in 1891, "must be sought in the extraordinary fertility of the soil and the immunity of the district from scarcity caused by the vicissitudes of the season."

Mr. Gait, writing on the census of 1901, says: "These *thānās* escaped the cyclone of 1893, their climate is particularly good, and they adjoin the *thānās* in the Tippera district, where the greatest development in that rapidly-growing district has taken place."

On the other hand, they suffered severely from the blight that overwhelmed the betel-nut trees along the Meghnā, and have no very large area under jute. Looking to the map, it seems that there must have been a considerable addition to the cultivable area owing to the growth of *chars* and islands in the Meghnā and to the reclamation of marshes, and this may have led to some migration from other parts of the district.

Migration.

Immigration certainly has not contributed to the growth of the population.

In 1901 about 19,000 persons born outside the district were enumerated in Noākhāli, while 34,000 persons born in Noākhāli were found elsewhere, giving a preponderance of 15,000 on the side of the emigrants, while ten years before the difference was under 11,000. The immigration is almost entirely from the adjoining British districts, especially Dacca, Tippera and Chittagong; and the emigration is chiefly to Bākarganj (9,000), Tippera (12,000), and Hill Tippera (4,000). A good deal of the migration is probably temporary, the inhabitants of this part of the country carrying their produce to considerable distances by boat and also serving as boatmen or lascars. It is said, though,

that there is a steady exodus to Hill Tippera, where land can be had cheap.

Density of population. The nominal area of the district is 1,644 square miles, which gives an average of 694 inhabitants to the square mile; the greatest density of population being in Chhāgalnaia *thānā* (1,033 to the square mile), Rāmganj coming second with 1,023 to the square mile, while Sudharām has only 557 inhabitants, and Hātiā only 299 to the square mile. But there is some uncertainty as to the areas owing to the extent of alluvion and diluvion, and in 1891 the Magistrate could only account for the population of Chhāgalnaia on the supposition that the measurement was wrong. The low density in Hātiā is attributable to the fact that a good deal of land on this, as on other islands, is cultivated by men who come over from the mainland and do not bring their families.

Towns, villages and houses. The only municipal town in the district is Sudharām (Noākhāli), the head-quarters station, the population of which in the thirty years between 1872 and 1901 rose from 4,681 to 6,520.

The total number of villages according to the census of 1901 was 2,633, and the number of houses 209,147, giving an average of 79 houses to a village, and 5·46 persons, to a house. But the village and the house are more or less arbitrary divisions made for administrative convenience at the census.

Sex. In the census of 1901 the enumerators found females to outnumber males by about 4 per mille over the whole district, but there were considerable local variations; males being much in excess in Hātiā and Lakhipur, and females in Chhāgalnaia and Feni.

Looking to the much larger number of men who go to work in other districts (26,000 males against 7,000 females) and the nearly equal numbers of foreigners of either sex found in the district, it seems that males are really in excess, and the local variations may be ascribed to the absence of men from their homes

Religion. Of the total population 24·04 per cent. were at the census of 1901 returned as Hindu and 75·89 per cent as Muhammadan. In 1872 the proportion of Muhammadans was 74·66 per cent and that of Hindus 25·25, so that the Muhammadans have multiplied slightly faster than the Hindus.

Islām is strongest in Sudharām *thānā*, where there were once Mughal outposts; while in Chhāgalnaia, belonging to the Hindu Rājās of Hill Tippera, more than a third of the inhabitants are Hindus. Generally the Muhammadans have more enterprise than their Hindu neighbours and are quicker to take up the reclamation of new alluvial formations, and therefore preponderate most on the islands and along the shore. An exception is Sandwīp, where the large proportion of Hindus, 26 per cent, is attributable to the migration of many Hāliā Dās (Kaibartta) families thither owing to the washing away of the opposite coast

by the Bāmni river. 662 Christians and 289 Buddhists were enumerated in the last census, but no Jews, Jains, or Animists. There were only 13 Brahmos.

Christians. Of the 662 Christians 14 were of European and allied races and 490 were Eurasian. These latter belonged almost entirely to the Church of Rome and represent the descendants of the former Portuguese settlers. The history of the Portuguese pirates of Sandwīp who terrorised the coasts of Noākhāli throughout the seventeenth century has been given in Chapter II. Later on they inter-married with the women of the country, adopted native habits and superstitions, and that all trace of Christianity was not lost was due to the Elders, who were elected to baptise the children and celebrate marriages in the absence of a priest. This was their condition in 1844 when the first missionary, Jubiburn, arrived in Noākhāli. He stayed but a short while and on his departure the half-castes were left again to relapse into paganism, until the arrival of Father Verite of the American mission of the Holy Cross in 1852. His health gave way, but a fresh band of workers followed in his footsteps. They were caught in a storm in which two of their number were drowned and all their supplies lost; but the mission stayed on and is still working. The present congregation is returned as 751, scattered over 10 villages. Most of them are poor and are domestics or cultivators. They have given up intermarriage with non-Christians, and retain their old Portuguese names, though these have undergone great changes in every day speech, *e.g.*, Fernandez becomes Forān, Manual Manu, etc. The mission maintains two boys' schools and one girls' school at Noākhāli and one girls' school at Izbalia. It makes few converts.

In 1889 a lady missionary of the Queensland section of the Australian mission went to Noākhāli and worked there among the women, and lately a married missionary has taken up his residence in Noākhāli and branch missions have been opened at Feni and Chururia. At the latter place there is a flourishing school presided over by a lady missionary.

Brahma Samāj. There are now two branches of the Brahma Samāj in the district, the Sādhāran Brahma Samāj, and the New Dispensation Church. Between them they have only twenty members, of whom but five are residents of the district.

Hindus. As a rule the Brahmans and other high caste Hindus are Sāktas, worshippers of the active producing principle as manifested in one or other of the goddess wives of Siva (Durga, Kāli or Pārvati); while the lower castes are Baishnabs or followers of Chaitanya. These latter retain some aborginal rites and have adopted others from their Muhammadan and Magh neighbours; for instance, they offer cakes to the three lakhs of *pirs* and *satyapirs,* who in the vulgar tongue are disguised as Hindu godlings under the names of the "Trailakhya Narayan and Satyanarayan." The worship of Sitala (the cooler or healer)

goddess of small-pox and chicken-pox, is very general and to raise funds for her *pūja* women, generally elderly women of low caste, adorned with vermilion and carrying a winnowing basket, a brass pot, and a little rice and fruit, go from door to door singing and begging, and having made a collection of rice and other offerings sell them and spend the proceeds on themselves and their goddess. In the rains, when snakes are plentiful, there is a *Nāg pūja* or serpent worship. In other parts of Bengal the serpent is worshipped in the name of Manasā Devī, a branch of the *manasā* plant being the symbol of the snake; but that is not so in Noākhāli. Saturn (*Sani*), the god who brings famine, plague, storms and earthquakes, has a great vogue, owing, it is clear, to the evidences of his power on this stormswept coast.

Vultures, *Sakuni*, are revered as messengers of Maghadeswari, a Magh deity. A she-goat or duck is sacrificed and a portion is roasted and with the skin and feathers is exposed in a bamboo basket. If no vultures are drawn to the offering, it is an omen of evil and more sumptuous offerings are vowed to propitiate the goddess. This worship prevails only in the outskirts of the district bordering on Hill Tippera and Chittagong.

Another peculiar festival observed by women has been brought here by the little colony of Dacca and Bikrampur people. On the day of the Sripanchami, sacred to Saraswati, the Hindu Minerva, the last day of the season (March to October) during which hilsa is proscribed to orthodox Hindus of Dacca, the women buy two fish and bury some scales under the post near the image of the goddess.

All the Hindu castes are divided into exogamous groups having no social relations with each other, *viz.*, those of Sandwip and those of the mainland. The cause of this is that Dilāl Khān's enforcement of marriage between pairs physically suited to one another is supposed to have ruined the caste of the Sandwip Hindus. Cast

The better class Hindus of the mainland in their turn find themselves looked down upon by their fellow castemen of the other side of the Meghnā, because Noākhāli is an unclean land that was not visited by the Pāndavas in their exile.

The principal Hindu castes are the Brahman (21,000), Kāyastha (34,000), Sudra (13,000), Bārui (8,000), Kumhār (5,000), Sutradhar (4,500), Nāpit (16,000), Sunri (9,000), Teli (5,000), Jugi (47,000), Kaibartta (38,500), Namasudra (27,500), and Bhuinmāli (4,000).

There has been a great increase in the number of Brahmans in the district during the last thirty years. In 1872 only 7,652 Brahmans were enumerated, in 1891 just under 12,000, and in 1901 the number had risen to nearly 15,000, of whom a little over 6,000 were Agradāni, Barna and Daibajna Brahmans ministering to Sudra and degraded castes, or acting as astrologers. Brahmans.

Considering that in all Bengal the increase in the number of Brahmans in two decades was under 4¼ per cent, these figures are remarkable.

Mr. O'Donnell in his report upon the census of 1891 advances a theory that the Brahmans of Eastern Bengal are of Mongoloid extraction, and nearer akin to the Chandāls of their own districts than to the Brahmans of Western India, but it is doubtful how far his remarks are applicable to the Brahmans of Noākhāli, who are said to be for the most part descendants of immigrants from western districts brought either by the Rajas of Tippera or by those of Bhulua with offers of Brahmottar grants.

ths. Thirty-four thousand Kayasthas were found enumerated in the district in 1901 as against over 45,000 ten years before. The reason for this difference seems to be that in 1891 all the Sudras, (which in Noākhāli is a caste name and includes the sub-divisions or subcastes of Ghulām Kāyastha, Sikdār and Bhandāri), returned themselves as Kāyasthas, whereas in the last census we find nearly 13,000 Sudras in the district.

In Noākhāli the Baidyas consider themselves superior to the Kāyasthas, but they cannot intermarry with Baidyas west of the Meghnā, and owing to their small number were compelled in some cases to take wives from among the Kāyasthas ,though they seldom gave their own daughters to the Kāyasthas in return. The Collector reports that such intermarriage has ceased completely. There are nearly 13,000 Kāyasthas in Chhāgalnaia *thānā*, and after that the largest number in any police circle is 5,300 in Rāmganj.

as. From a little over 4,000 in 1872 the number of persons in the district describing themselves as Sudras has risen to nearly 13,000. The origin of this caste is obscure, but it is commonly supposed that they are descendants of slaves who served in the houses of Hindus of good caste. They hold a respectable position among the *Nabasākhs*, and follow generally the customs of the Kāyasthas, except that it is usually the bride and not the bridegroom who fetches a price (*pan*).

Kāyasthas have been known to take their wives from Sudra families, and to this day it is common enough for a Sudra of position to rise into the ranks of the Kāyasthas.

i. The number of these returned in the census of 1901 was a little over 8,000, more than double what it was ten years before. In 1891 the Collector reported that Bārui was not a caste name in the district, but that some Sudras having taken to growing betel, and being thus united by occupation as well as ancestry had developed peculiar regulative caste arrangements among themselves. The great increase in their number shows that the process still continues.

i and The Sunris and Telis of Noākhāli generally call themselves *Sāhā*. They are the great shopkeeping and trading caste of the district, and many of them are very well off.

Jugis.

The Jugis, or Jogis as they prefer to be called, numbering nearly 47,000, are the principal race caste of Noākhāli. Their origin is obscure, but Dr. Buchanan thought it probable that they were either the priesthood of the country during the reign of the dynasty to which Gopi Chandra belonged, or Sudras dedicated to a religious life but degraded by the great reformer Sankarāchārya, and that they came with the Pāl Rājās from Western India. They are weavers by profession, and regard the family of Dalāl Bāzār in the Noākhāli district as the head of their race. In the middle of the seventeenth century Braja Ballav Ray of that family was *dalāl* or broker, and his brother appraiser, of the English factory of Char Pātā on the Meghnā, and the son of Braja Bullav was given the title of Rājā and a rent-free estate, which is still held by his descendants. The Jugis of Noākhāli belong generally to the Māsya group, who perform the Srāddha thirty days after death. They bury their dead instead of burning them, merely putting fire into the mouth of the corpse. They do not employ Brahmans, but have priests of their own, who are known as Mahātmas or Pandits, and sometimes as Goswāmis. Jugis usually call themselves Nāth, and the better classes of them describe themselves as Pandit-Nāth. At one time weaving in Noākhāli was in a bad way, and the Jugis, who rarely have cultivation of their own, were forced to work as day labourers, but in the last few years there has been some resuscitation of weaving and the Jugis seem to be doing well. They are a well educated and enterprising race and their numbers in Noākhāli have increased by about 24 per cent in 20 years, though in other parts of Bengal they seem to be dying out.

Kaibarttas.

Next to the Jugis come the Kaibarttas, now over 38,000 and increasing rapidly. In the census of 1901 Kaibartta, Hāliā Das, and Jāliās, have been all classed together, though in 1891 only one section of the Jāliās were treated as Kaibarttas. About 11,000 Kaibarttas are now returned as belonging to the fishing or Jāliā section of the caste, but the figures must be received with caution, as there is naturally a tendency for the fishermen to enrol themselves in the more reputable class if they have any land. The Hāliā Dāses or cultivating section of the Kaibartta caste are now a rising race.

Namasudras.

The Namasudras, or Chandāls, as they used to be called, are supposed to be the descendants of a tribe who entered Bengal from the north-east. The number enumerated in the district in 1901 was a little over 27,000, but this by no means represents the proportion of the population belonging to this race, for the greater part of the Muhammadans of the district are probably the descendants of converts from this caste. They are divided into four classes—*viz.*, (1) Bachhāri, who are cultivators, and also deal in *hoglā* leaves and mats ; (2) Saralya, who are fishermen and carry palanquins ; (3) Amarabādia, who are fishermen,

but do not carry palanquins ; (4) Sandwīp, who live in Sandwīp and grow betel leaves. Each of these classes is endogamous in itself.

The cultivating Namasudras are rising in the social scale and in material prosperity. They are perhaps more industrious, persevering, and economical, but somewhat less intelligent than their Muhammadan fellow cultivators, rather obstinate and of an excitable temper.

ili. These are the sweeper caste of Eastern Bengal, corresponding to the Hāris of Western Bengal, but consider themselves superior. Their women do not as a rule assist in scavenging, and they profess not to work for Chandāls. In Noākhāli they have two sub-castes, Barabhāgia and Chhotābhāgia; the former are chiefly cultivators, musicians, and palanquin bearers, and having abandoned their race profession and abjured pork hold themselves aloof from their still degraded brethren.

Caste divisions are less rigid to the east of the Meghnā and it is said that well-to-do members of lower castes can obtain admission into one of higher rank ; not all at once, but by change of surname, association with members of the better caste, and judicious expenditure, recognition is obtained in course of time. Thus a successful Jugi, Saha, or Namasudra assumes a convenient title such as *Majumdār* or *Chaudhri*, and discarding the old forms of address weaves the new title into every conversation. His brothers become *Bara Majumdār*, *Chhotā Majumdār*, etc., and when the neighbours have become accustomed to the new name he boldly insists on its adoption, and what is at first overlooked and then tolerated meets by persistency and repetition with general acknowledgment.

So the son of a Dhobi or a Namasudra may be found with the title of *Majumdār*, though as yet there is no record of their having been admitted into the ranks of the Kāyasthas or of their daughters having been accepted as brides by orthodox Hindus of the superior castes. Sudras, however, have been known to obtain admission to the ranks of the Kāyasthas, and Kāyasthas have become Baidyas.*

* It is perhaps not generally known that the Muhammadan Governors exercised a certain control over caste, and that this was in a measure claimed by the East India Company as their successors—*vide* the following extract from the proceedings of the President and Council dated the 16th August 1769 :—

"The peculiar punishment of forfeiting castes, to which the Hindus are liable, is often inflicted from private pique and personal resentment amongst themselves, and requires to be restrained to those occasions only where there may be a regular process, and clear proofs of the offence before the Brahmans, who are their natural judges. But when any man has naturally forfeited his caste, you are to observe that he cannot be restored to it, without the sanction of Government; which was a political supremacy reserved to themselves by the Muhammadans, and which, as it publicly asserts the subordination of Hindus, who are so considerable a majority of subjects, ought not to be laid down ; though every indulgence and privilege of caste should be otherwise allowed them.

Muhammadans.

Out of the 866,290 Muhammadans in the district 860,580 returned themselves in 1901 as Shekhs; of the residue about 1,000 called themselves Pathāns and 1,300 Saiyads, the others include Nikari (fish dealers) 1,000, Nagarchi (drummers) 900, and Dai (midwives and castrators of cattle) 1,300. They are all Sunnis of the Hanafi sect. Among the Saiyads and Pathāns may be seen aquiline features and sinewy frames that proclaim unmistakably their foreign extraction, but it may safely be said that a vast majority of the Shekhs and lower sections of the community are descended from the aboriginal races of the district, some few also from Kāyastha converts. Indeed Pir Ambar Shāh in *pargana* Ambarābād and Pir Mīr Ahmed Khandkar in *pargana* Bābupur are credited even by Hindu historians with an immense number of conversions, and Muhammadans with surnames of Chanda, Pāl, and Dutt, are to be found in the district to this day. Formerly, it is said, the Muhammadans kept to many of their old Hindu customs, but about the middle of last century they came under the influence of a reforming priest, Maulavi Imāmuddīn, and are now, almost to a man, Farāzis. They abhor all innovations (*bida'at*) and the worship of saints (*shark*). Consequently they keep only the most orthodox of festivals and reverence no local shrine; even the worship of 'the three lakhs of pirs' is now confined to the Hindus.

Customs.

The birth of a child is an occasion for a feast to friends and relations, and the guests are expected to make small presents of from four annas to a rupee. Fifty to three hundred persons may be invited and Rs. 500 spent on such an occasion, but there is no music, dancing, or singing.

One curious custom in Noākhāli is that women who are yet not strictly secluded invariably carry an umbrella when they walk abroad, and it seems to offer as complete protection as a *barka*.

Hindu wedding ceremonies in Noākhāli are peculiar only in that they sometimes take place in the bridegroom's not the bride's house, the parents of the bridegroom bearing the whole expense. Remarriage used to be allowed among Namasudras, Dhobis, and other low castes, but is becoming more and more uncommon, as, in the effort to rise, the lower castes endeavour to assimilate their customs to those of the higher castes.

Muhammadan marriages are usually celebrated in the bride's house.

Dress.

There is nothing in the dress of the Hindus of Noākhāli that differs from that found in others parts of Bengal. Formerly a rag round his waist was all that the peasant wore, but nowadays he has generally a decent *dhuti* of Manchester or country-made cotton, a cotton sheet (*chādar*) to wrap round his shoulders; and of late years woollen wests of English or German manufacture have become common. The Farāzi Muhammadans commonly wear a *lungi*, which is a cotton cloth, generally striped or in coloured

checks, wrapped round the loins but not passed between the legs, and a little muslin cap. Their shawls are often coloured, blue or pink. To wrap themselves in during the cold weather nights quilts stuffed with tree cotton (*dhusa*) are in general use and look very effective, while those who cannot afford this use a covering of old clothes and rags stitched together (*kantha*); and as a protection against sun and rain when working in the fields the peasants put on a large and strange kind of basket work or mat hat (*jongra*) shaped like a tortoise shell that shields the whole spine. Mat umbrellas, effective but clumsy, have been almost completely displaced by Manchester cotton umbrellas. The women wear *sāris*, a sheet about five yards long of white or coloured cotton. For ornaments a cultivator's wife will have lacquer bracelets (*lākh churi*), a silver necklace (*hāsuli*), and a gold nose ring (*nāth*). A locket (*ta'wiz*) will generally be added, and of course among the well-to-do classes there will be more ornaments, ear-rings perhaps, and anklets.

ouses. The substantial cultivator has usually four huts in his homestead, all facing on one courtyard, with one or two cattle-sheds and one or two houses for stores. Two of the huts would be set apart as sleeping rooms for the male and female members of the family; a third would be reserved for a cook-shed, and the fourth for the *baitakkhāna* or sitting room, in which visitors are received and where men sit and smoke in the evening. The huts are usually built on raised plinths plastered with clay and cow-dung. The walls are of hill bamboos interlaced and attached to wooden supports, roofs are of thatching grass (*ulu* or *chan*) laid on a bamboo framework. Those who can afford it, roof their houses with corrugated iron, and sometimes have the walls of the same material as a protection against incendiarism, which is not uncommon in this district.

In the east of the district the size of the homesteads is regulated strictly by convention, the common size being 7 *nals* by 10 *nals* (the *nal* being 12 feet), but other sizes are found, and an astrologer is consulted to determine the dimensions before a new homestead is marked out. Formerly even Muhammadans sought the advice of Hindu *achāryas* on this point, but at present they have recourse to their own *maulvis*.

rniture. The furniture is of the simplest even in the houses of those who are comparatively well off. The poor sleep on mats (*chatai* or *pāti*) laid on the floor, but in more substantial houses the bedding is spread on a raised platform or bedstead of wood (*chauki*). The peasant generally squats and requires no chair, but a cane or bamboo stool and a plank bench will often be found. Muhammadans generally use earthenware plates and dishes, but these have not been adopted by the Hindus. A bellmetal plate (*thāl*), a brass water pot (*ghati*), a brass cup (*bāti*), a brass or whitemetal utensil with a spout like a teapot (*badna* or *gāru*),

a few earthenware cooking pots and water pitchers, and an iron pan (*karai*), will be found in most houses. Muhammadans generally use copper vessels (*dekchi*) for cooking. Spoons, knives, pestles, baskets, etc., for cutting up and preparing the food complete the ordinary equipment.

Food. Rice is the staple food of the district. The cultivators have as a rule three meals in the day; at the midday and evening meals boiled rice forms the foundation, and with it are mixed pulses and vegetables, and fish, if this is to be had. In the morning a little of the rice left over from the previous night is taken cold, or perhaps a little parched rice (*chira*), or *muri*, which is rice boiled, dried, husked and blown up by cooking it on a pot of hot sand, or *khai*, another preparation of rice cooked in heated sand. A little jack or mango fruit may be added if in season, and the well-to-do have cakes of wheat flour.

Fowls and ducks are to be seen about the Muhammadan households, and are eaten on festive occasions, and goat's flesh is also a popular dish.

Language. It is a curious and interesting fact that the dialect of Bengali spoken in Sandwip differs from that in the rest of the district. The vernacular of Sandwīp resembles closely that of Dacca, and is classed by Dr. Grierson* in the Eastern Bengali group. The chief peculiarities of this dialect are as follows:—The inherent vowel is usually pronounced like 'o' in 'hot' but sometimes lengthened like the 'o' in 'boat.' An unaccented 'i' is almost invariably pronounced not in its own syllable but epenthetically in the preceding syllable. The aspirate whether standing by itself or in soft aspirated consonants is not sounded. The sibilants are all pronounced as 'sh', the sound of hard 's' being given to 'chh', while an initial 'ch' is pronounced as 'ts'. The consonant 'j' of standard Bengali becomes 'z'. The termination of the accusative dative is 'ere', and that of the instrumental locative is 'ē', or after a vowel 'tē'. Verbs form their infintives in 'to' or 'tām'. As special forms distinguishing it from the Dacca dialect may be noted the interpolation of 'gā' before the case terminations of the plural, the use of the verb 'dite' (to give) to form inceptive compounds as in *karan dila* (began to do), and the infinitive in 'tām'. There is also a tendency to drop the letter 'r'. In Hātiā and on the mainland of Noākhāli the dialect spoken is very similar to that of Chittagong and is placed by Dr. Grierson in the south-eastern group, though it contains several forms that belong rather to the eastern group. An initial aspirate is usually, and a medial one often, dropped. The initial 's' often becomes 'h' and 'p' and 'ph' are pronounced like 'f' or sometimes even as 'h', as 'holā' for 'polā' a son. 'S' when it does not become 'h' is pronounced as 'sh', and the sound of hard 's' is represented by 'chh'. 'T' and 'th' hard are often

* Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. V, page 247.

changed to 'd', thus 'chhotā' is pronounced '*sōdo*' and 'j' and 'jh' are pronounced like 'z' in zeal. Final 'a' in the past tenses of verbs is omitted as in *āchhil* (pronounced *āsil*) was, and final 'e' is often dropped. Short words with long 'a' in the first syllable sometimes insert 'i' or less frequently 'u', thus 'hāil,' for 'hāl,' a rudder. Single consonants between two vowels are often dropped, and 'm' in such a position is changed to *anunāsika*, thus 'chākar' is pronounced 'sãor' and *āmār* becomes *ār*. Curious grammatical forms are the termination in 'r' for first person present of the verb, *e.g.*, *mōriēr* (I die or am dying), *koriyer* (I do); the future in 'u' as *kamu* (I shall say); the infinitive in *tām*, more rarely in *to*, the second person singular in 't' as *āsŏt* (thou art); the use of *gā* to form the plural as in *tā-gā-re* (to them); and of *thun* for the ablative as in *hāt-re-thun* (from the market).

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

In Hunter's statistical account of the district written about the year 1876 fever, diarrhœa, dysentery, rheumatism, and cutaneous affections were said to be endemic; cholera then rarely assumed an epidemic form though sporadic cases were met with in the cold season; and small-pox recurred annually, and inoculation against it was common. It was then reported that the jungle near Lakhipur and the tanks and marshes in Rāmganj *thānā* were particularly unhealthy. At present the general standard of health is wonderfully high considering the low level of the district and the habits of the people, who live in huts, generally on the bank of some weed-covered pool and so surrounded by trees that sunlight and air can hardly penetrate, and will bathe in that pool and drink its water even though some fine well-preserved tank exists a few hundred yards away.

Births and deaths.

The number of deaths recorded in the years 1893—1902 amounted to 352,536, or 32·8 annually per thousand of the mean population for the decade, and for the next six years the number of deaths averaged 29·5 per mille per annum on the estimated mean population.* In 1888 the Civil Surgeon returned the average mortality at only 21·6 per 1,000, but it may safely be said that the reporting was defective. The number of births reported in the decade 1893—1902 was 475,366, showing an apparent increase in population of about 123,000 whereas the actual increase was 132,000, and that in spite of a preponderance of emigration over immigration. Calculated on the mean population for that decade the annual birth-rate was 44·2 per mille, and for the following eight years it averages a little less; we may take it that the population is increasing annually by about 1½ per cent, and must by 1908 have risen to nearly, if not quite, one and a quarter million. In 1908 the total number of deaths registered was 33,447 and that of births 53,581, giving an increase of over 20,000 persons, or more than 16 per thousand on an estimated population of 1,250,000. The year 1909 was exceptionally unhealthy; the deaths recorded being 42,996, or about 34 per mille of the population, against 52,448 births.

Local Variations.

It is noticeable that the proportion of deaths among Muhammadans is much greater than among Hindus; the death rates among the former according to the returns of the Sanitary Com-

* The figures will not tally with those in Table VI of the district statistics in which the population has been taken wrongly at 1,221,728, a clerical mistake. Moreover I have thought it right in calculating percentages to allow for the growth of population, otherwise the figures must give a mistaken impression of an increasing death rate. The same remarks apply to the birth rates.

missioner for the years 1905—08 being from 2 to 5 per mille greater than among Hindus. Possibly however this is due to the ratios being falsified by the greater increase in the total Muhammadan population. Lakhipur, Rāmganj and Begamganj *thānās*, *i.e.*, the rich betel growing tract in the north-west of the district, have far lower death rates than Hātiā, Sandwip, Sudharām, or Companyganj (Bāmni). In the ten years ending 1902 the death rates in the former three *thānās* were less than two-thirds the rates in the other four. The most unhealthy division during that decade was Companyganj with an average annual death rate of 40·5 per mille; and Sudharām *thānā*, Hātiā, Sandwīp, and Chhāgalnāia all had death rates varying from 37 to 39 per mille. Since then there has been a good deal of change in the relative mortality. For the five years ending in 1909 Hātiā shows much the highest mortality, the death rates for the years 1907 and 1908 being 58 and 61 per thousand calculated on the population of 1901, and for the five years 48 per thousand on an average. The real percentage is lower, but it is impossible to estimate the present population of the islands. The Civil Surgeon attributes the high mortality partly to the large number of immigrants, who suffer from fever brought on by exposure and bad water, and partly to the ravages of cholera. Next to Hātiā comes Feni, which is liable to inundation and has a considerable immigrant population. The same applies to Chhāgalnāia which has about the same death rate as Companyganj. Birth rates vary less than the death rates, the annual number per thousand for the decade 1893—1902 ranging from 39 in Feni to 45 in Hātiā.

In 1908 the nominal birth rate in Lakhipur, calculated on the population of 1901, was over 53 per mille, and though allowance must be made for the increase in the adult population it is clear that the proportion of births was exceptional. On the whole birth rates are highest in Lakhipur, Rāmganj, Hātiā, and Bāmni *thānās*, and lowest in Chhāgalnāia, Sudharām and Feni. Sudharām town returns only $18\frac{2}{3}$ births per thousand. An attempt was made at the time of the last census to establish some connection between birth rates and prices, but the conclusions were quite unconvincing.

asonal riations.

Statistics do not show very great variations from month to month and the distribution varies a good deal. Generally speaking the rainy months show the fewest deaths from fever, and the cold months, November to January, when the country is drying up, most; but the highest recorded fever mortality in any one month in the last five years, 3,722, was in May 1909 and the next highest in May 1905. Cholera is spread fairly evenly over the year; the greatest number of deaths in any month during the recent outbreaks being 1,573 in March 1907, but there were 963 and 759 deaths in November and December of that year, and 862 in August 1906.

Principal diseases.

Fever is, as everywhere in Bengal, the most general complaint. In Noākhāli it is mostly of the quotidian type and not very virulent; and the district has not in the last century and a half suffered from any epidemic fevers such as have from time to time depopulated less fortunate parts of Bengal. For the first seven years of this century the deaths from fever decreased steadily. In 1908 fevers were stated to have caused 25,094 out of the 33,381 deaths reported, but it must be borne in mind that to the village chaukidar, who is the source of the information, fever is a convenient term covering all sorts of unrecognised diseases, and it is certain that many of the deaths put down to fever are not due to malaria. The Civil Surgeon is of opinion that lung diseases, pulmonary phthisis and pneumonia, are much more prevalent than the statistics show, and account for many of the deaths put down to fever.

Cholera.

Every year some deaths from cholera are reported, but it has rarely taken a serious hold. After the great cyclone of 1876 it raged in the islands and shores that had been swept by the storm wave, and there was a bad outbreak of it after the cyclone of 1893. Cholera seems to be more prevalent or better reported than formerly, for in the years 1885—87 the average number of deaths attributed to it each year was 674, while the average annual number of deaths from cholera in the years 1895—99 was 1,713, in the next quinquennium 2,511, and in the next four years 4,499. In 1904 it broke out all over the district, but chiefly in the west Next year it was worst in Sandwīp, where over one per cent of the inhabitants died of it, and in 1906 there was a recrudescence of cholera over the whole district and 6,028 fatal cases were reported. In 1907 it was yet worse, especially in Hātiā where it caused over 2,000 deaths, but in 1908 the attack abated and the number of deaths fell to 1,561.

Other diseases.

Throughout the districts along the Meghnā the people suffer much from intestinal worms (*Ascaris lumbricoides*). This is not often a fatal complaint, but more than a third of the patients that attended the dispensaries in 1907 were treated for worms; children are particularly subject to the invasions of this parasite. Ringworm and other diseases of the skin are exceedingly common and account for nearly another third of the patients at the dispensaries. In the markets men may be seen selling vermifuges and remedies for itch and ringworm in gaily coloured paper packets.

Dyspepsia, bowel complaints, and rheumatic affections are common, but not more so than in other districts.

Infirmities.

Leprosy is rare, affecting less than five persons in every 100,000, the lowest proportion in all Bengal. Blindness is on a par with other districts, the proportion of males being 79, and for females 57, in each 100,000. The figures for deaf-mutism, 82 males and 49 females in each 100,000, are high for Eastern

Bengal, but only 32 persons in each 100,000 were returned as insane. On the whole the district may be said not to be seriously affected by any infirmity.

ıall-pox d ccination.

Small-pox is endemic in the district, but has not taken an epidemic form in recent years. In the three years 1880 –83, the deaths from small-pox were returned as 745 a year, or about 9 persons in every 10,000, but latterly the disease has become less common. There were 467 deaths from small-pox reported in 1901, but the average annual number for the decade ending 1902 was just under 100. Since then there have been rather more cases, or perhaps there has been better reporting, and for the ten years ending in 1908 the average annual number of deaths is about 4 in every 10,000 inhabitants, but in 1908 there were only 53 deaths. Small-pox occurs in every part of the district, but of late years the worst outbreaks have been in Companyganj, where 14 persons out of every 10,000 persons died of it in 1906, and in Sandwīp where nearly 1 in every 1,000 inhabitants died of it in 1907.

Vaccination is compulsory only in Sudharām town; elsewhere it is voluntary. In 1908-09 the establishment for vaccination under the control of the Civil Surgeon consisted of one Inspector, two Sub-Inspectors, one paid vaccinator, and 38 licensed vaccinators; the number of persons vaccinated was over 64,000, and the cost of the operations was Rs. 2,946. It is calculated that a third of the population is now protected by vaccination, but there is a good deal of opposition among the *farāzi* Muhammadans, and some difficulty in realising fees. The practice of in oculation has quite died out.

spensaries.

In 1892 there were only five dispensaries in the district and at these on an average 114 persons received treatment daily. Since then the number of dispensaries has grown steadily and in 1908 there were 14 public dispensaries attended daily by about 725 out-patients. Only two of the dispensaries have accommodation for in-patients, *viz.*, Noākhāli, in which the average daily number of in-patients in 1908 was 16·84, and Feni, in which the daily average number was 1·66 patients. Besides these there is a private dispensary at Subhapur, maintained by the Rājā of Hill Tippera. All the other dispensaries, except that at Dalāl Bāzār, which is supported entirely by Babu Surendra Kumar Ray, the local *zamīndār*, are managed by local committees and supported mainly by local fund contributions. Those at Noākhāli, Feni and Harishpur are in charge of Sub-Assistant Surgeons; the others are under qualified native doctors or compounders. The expenditure on these dispensaries in 1909 was Rs. 21,117 including nearly Rs. 5,000 on buildings, and their income Rs. 17,490 of which in round figures Rs. 3,000 came from Government, Rs. 10,000 from local funds, and Rs. 4,000 from subscriptions. The dispensaries are much appreciated, but many of the buildings are very poor.

Those at Begamganj and Bose's Hāt are being reconstructed at a cost of Rs. 1,200 each, and Rs. 12,000 are to be spent on a hospital at Feni. There are a good many native practitioners all over the district. Most of them are unqualified, but in Noākhāli town alone there are six qualified doctors, three Allopaths, and two Homœopaths, while one practises both systems.

Water-supply. For the supply of drinking water Noākhāli depends entirely upon the tanks that are to be found in large numbers in every village. Unfortunately, many of these have been much neglected and allowed to become overgrown with weed until the water is unfit for human consumption. For some time past endeavours have been made to improve the water-supply by excavating or re-excavating tanks where they are most wanted, and reserving them for drinking. To this end the District Board devotes, annually a certain portion of its income, contributing a third of the cost provided another third is contributed by the inhabitants, and when these conditions are fulfilled, Government pays the remaining third. In this way 37 tanks have been reserved, and although it is impossible to prevent their pollution without a larger expenditure on guards than the District Board can afford, yet it is said that these reserve tanks contain generally drinkable water and have proved of much benefit to the people.

CHAPTER V.

PRICES, RENTS, WAGES AND MEASURES.

Prices.

Our first glimpse of prices in these parts is afforded by Cesare Federico, who, visiting Sandwīp about 1589, was astonished at the cheapness and abundance of provisions. He bought salted beeves at a little over three shillings each, hogs at half that price, and 'great fat hens' at a penny apiece, and was told he had been shamefully overcharged.

Shamsher Ghāzi, the notorious usurper, who in the beginning of the eighteenth century became for a while dictator of Tippera, fixed the prices at which commodities were to be sold in his dominion.

Clean rice, chillies and cotton were to be sold at 64 seers to the rupee, salt, peas and molasses at 32 seers to the rupee. No doubt these prices were low even for that period, but no other records of that time, or indeed till much later, are available. In 1763 the assessment of Sandwīp was made on the basis of 1¼ *kannua* of paddy to the rupee, but the weight of the *kannua* is an unsolved mystery. In 1866-67 when famine raged through the greater part of Bengal and prices reached an unprecedented height, common rice sold at Rs. 4-12-0 per maund, and the best at Rs. 7-4-0 per maund. In the years 1870—73 when prices had resumed their normal level, clean rice sold at from Re. 1-2-0 to Rs. 2-4-0 per maund according to the season and quality, and paddy at from 7 annas to Re. 1-4-0 per maund.

For the five years 1896—1900 the average price of common rice in Noākhāli was 14 seers per rupee, or Rs. 2-14-0 a maund, and it was slightly cheaper during the next five, but in 1906 there was a remarkable change, and only 8¼ seers of common rice were to be bought per rupee at Kālitārā Hāt, and 8½ seers at Feni. These high prices were maintained with slight fluctuations during the next two years, but now are falling fast, and the returns of January 1910 show common rice to be selling at 12 seers a rupee in Noākhāli and 15 seers in Feni. Fine rice may go up to double the price.

Salt is another article of which the prices have varied greatly. In 1766 the East India Company limited its retail price to Rs. 2 a maund, but in 1872-73 it was selling at Rs. 5 a maund and this was the price as late as 1897; after that it became slightly cheaper, and on the revision of the salt duties sold in 1905 at 13 seers to the rupee, and at present sells at 20 seers to the rupee.

Betel-nuts, a most important article of trade, sell at four seers, more or less, to the rupee. From a report of 1830 it

appears that at that time the price was 2½ to 3 *kāhans* (16 to 19 seers) a rupee, and that this was less than half the price at the date of the permanent settlement. Betel-leaves fetch one to three annas a *bira*, containing from 96 to 112 leaves. A buffalo sells for about Rs. 45, a good bullock for Rs. 30, and a cow for Rs. 15.

Wages.

In 1852—58 earthwork on the roads was paid for at Re. 1 to Re. 1-8-0 per 1,000 cubic feet. The rates are now Rs. 3-8-0 and upwards. It appears from the Statistical Account that in the twenty years preceding 1876 wages had doubled, but since then there has been little change. The commonest labourer then got, and now gets, 4 annas a day; a man of some skill who can build a hut may get as much as 8 annas a day. Carpenters and masons get from 8 to 12 annas a day; a boatman will get Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 a month, besides two meals a day; and an agricultural labourer engaged for the season receives from Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 a month, or less, if he is given his food. These of course are average wages, and when the demand is great, higher rates prevail. Mr. Cumming states in his report of 1899 that the Noākhāli labourer, who goes north in the autumn and winter for the harvesting, is paid 4 annas and two meals a day, or from 7 to 8 annas without meals. The men who work on the *chars* at seed time and harvest are more highly paid getting as much as 12 annas* a day.

Measures.

Land is measured by the *kāni*, though this tends to be supplanted by the *bigha* of forty yards square which is the standard used in Government surveys. The *kāni* is the area in a rectangle 10 *nals* by 12 *nals*; but the *nal* (reed) varies in length. In 1790 Mr. Dandridge when engaged on the partition of Bhulua reported that the records of the Kanungos mentioned four different *nals*, *viz*:—

(1) the Ilāhi, or divine, containing 10 yards of 12 *musht*, or hands breadth, each;
(2) the Shāhi, or royal, containing 10 yards of 11 hands;
(3) the Sikandari, or Alexandrian rod, containing 10 yards of 10 hands;
(4) the *nal* of Mritanjay, containing 10 yards of 9 hands each.

There was no trace of the first two having been used here and the *zamīndārs* laid no claim to either.

The third was the measure claimed by the *zamīndārs* as the old established standard of the *pargana*. The last was the rod used in a general measurement of this district made before the year 1750, and the *zamīndārs* claimed the privilege of measuring the lands of their tenure-holders by it, while retaining for themselves the benefit of the Sikandari *nal*.

* Based on local information. In the last quinquenial report the wages of a coolie in Hātiā were given as 4 annas a day in addition to three meals.

The Board decided that the Mritanjay *nal* should be used, but a report made by the Collector in 1888 A.D. does not show the *kāni* so determined, which is equivalent to 2·65 acres, to be in use. The old *tāluks* of Bhulua are shown to be measured by the Sikandari *nal*, giving a *kāni* of 3·06 acres, while newer *tāluks* are measured with a *nal* of 16 cubits (*kāni*=1·58 acres), *haulas* with a *nal* of 15 cubits (*kāni*=1·39 acres) and *raiyati* lands with a *nal* of 14 cubits (*kāni*=1·21 acres). The *Amirābād tāluks* are measured with a *nal* of 18 cubits (*kāni*=2 acres).* For *haulas* the *nal* of 15 cubits, and for *raiyati* holdings that of 14 cubits are found in most *parganas*. Ambarābād has a huge *nal* of 40 cubits. Sandwīp has one of 48 cubits (*kāni*=14·28 acres), and tenures of some classes there are measured with a *nal* of 16 cubits, but each cubit is 20¾ inches. Mr. Duncan notes that the Sandwīp *nal* was regulated by the length of the arm of one of the *chaudhris*. In the southern division of Chakla Roshnābād there are only 30 square *nals* in the *kāni*, which is ·396 of an acre.

The divisions and multiples of the *kāni* are 20 *til*=1 *kāg*; 4 *kāg*=1 *kāuri*; 4 *kāuri*=1 *ganda*; 20 *gandas*=1 *kāni*; 16 *kānis* =1 *dron*.

Most articles are sold by the seer of 82⅝ tolās, but liquids such as milk sell by the standard seer of 80 tolās. The subdivisions and multiples of the seer are 4 *kancha*=1 *chatāk*; 4 *chatāk*=1 *poya*; 4 *poya*=1 *ser* (seer); 5 *ser*=1 *pasuri*; 8 *pasuri*=1 *man* (maund). The standard maund equals 82 2/7 pounds avoirdupois.

For time, the day is divided into eight watches (*prahar*), each of which contains 7½ *danda*. The *danda* is used also as a measure of distance, meaning the distance a man would walk in the time, or a mile and a bittock.

Betel-leaves are sold by the *birā*, containing 24 or 28 quartettes (*ganda*) of leaves.

[...] rates. In 1794 the average rate of rent paid by *tālukdārs* in Sandwīp, which was nominally four-fifths of that paid by the cultivator, was Rs. 2-9-0 an acre. By 1837 it had risen to Rs. 3-9-0. In *pargana* Bhulua about the year 1840 the rates of cultivators' holdings ranged from Rs. 2-4-0 to Rs. 4-8-0 an acre, and they rose by about 25 per cent in the next thirty years.

In the correspondence of the years 1860—64 there are numerous references to the rates, which are in almost all cases Rs. 4 or Rs. 5 a *kāni* (or from Rs. 2 to Rs. 4 an acre) for arable land, the measure varying rather than the rate. Homestead land fetched Rs. 7 a *kāni* or more.

In the permanent settlement of lands in Amirābād and Bedarābād made by the Courjon brothers in 1866 rates varied from

* In the Courjon estates (Amirābād and Bedarābād) the *kāni*, according to the sub-divisional officer, is equal to 4 bighas 16 cottas=1·6 acres.

Rs. 4 to Rs. 8 per *kāni* or about Rs. 2-8-8 to Rs. 5 an acre, and were about 20 per cent higher in the settlement of 1869.

In Chakla Roshnābād about 1896 Mr. Cumming found the all-round rate per acre on the holdings of occupancy ryots in the Noākhāli district to be Rs. 3-10-4 per acre, while the recognised rates varied from Re. 1-8-0 to Rs. 4 a *kāni*, or from Rs. 3-12-0 to Rs. 10 per acre.

Recent settlements on Government *chars* give rates of Rs. 2-4-0 to Rs. 2-13-0 an acre for cultivated land. Lower rates are fixed for land in the earlier stages of reclamation. In 1819 Mr. Walters found the tenants of Hātiā to pay no rent for the first eight years, and nowadays tenants begin by paying 6 annas an acre for *degi char* or *malanghi char* lands, the rates rising year by year to about Re. 1-8-0. For cultivable lands they pay at progressive rates rising from 12 annas to Rs. 2-4-0 or Rs. 2-8-0 an acre in five years.

In the settlement of Bāmni (1900—03) the average rents paid by settled *raiyats* were found to be Rs. 2-2-2 per acre, and that for tenure-holders Re. 1-7-2. Under-*raiyats*' rents averaged Rs. 6-15-0 per acre.

A note prepared in the Collector's office mentions a special enquiry made in the years 1896—97 which showed that the rates in the recognised central and southern *thānās* averaged Rs. 12-8-0 a *kāni*—say Rs. 10 an acre—and were slightly lower in the north and west. This note is not to be found, and these rates seem very high in comparison with other returns, even making allowance for the fact that they were only nominal rates, and that old tenants would pay much less.

Indebtedness.

The following account is taken from the Commissioner's Report for the years 1900—1905 :—

"From enquiry made by the Magistrate in two selected panchayati circles it was ascertained that in one circle out of 833 families, 218, or 24·7 per cent, are free from debt, and 102, or 11·5 per cent, are very poor. 107 familes, or 12·11 per cent, have contracted debts amounting to twice their annual income or more. In 29, or 27·1 per cent, of these cases the debts are due to the requirements of trade or the purchase of landed property, while in 57, or 53·3 per cent, the indebtedness is on account of expenditure on social ceremonies. In only 22 cases the debts are reported to be due to litigation. In the other circle out of 935 families, 268, or 28·6 per cent, are free from debts, while 152, or 16·3 per cent, are without any landed property. The debts incurred by 142 families, or 15·18 per cent, amount to twice their annual income or more. Out of these 142 cases, 54, or 38 per cent, have contracted debts for trade purposes or purchase of lands, and 45, or 31·7 per cent, for expenses on social ceremonies.

Taking the average of the two circles, it appears that 26·6 per cent of the families are free from debt and 13·9 per cent

have no landed property, while 13·6 per cent are heavily involved, their debts amounting to double their annual income or more. But of these, 32·6 per cent have contracted their debts for the purpose of speculation, while 42·5 per cent. owe their indebtedness to expenditure on social ceremonies. These figures may be taken as representing with fair accuracy the state of things all over the district. It also appeared that the old supposition that extravagance in social ceremonies is the principal cause of poverty stands true, but that litigation contributes less to impoverishment than has generally been supposed."

aterial idition. In 1905 the Collector reported that scarcity was unknown in the district, and the pinch of poverty felt only by a small proportion of the population. The people, he said, were very backward and wanting in enterprise, and their standard of living, though rising slowly, was still lower than that of other parts of Bengal. They wear better clothing than formerly, use more oil in their cooking, and buy small articles of luxury, lamps, and various fancy goods and utensils. The amount in deposit in the savings banks grew steadily for a while, but in 1908-09 the withdrawals were nearly as heavy as the deposits, and it is said that the people are inclined to seek more profitable investments.

CHAPTER VI.

AGRICULTURE.

On the extreme east of the district the country is slightly undulating and intersected by numerous hill streams converging from the west, the north, and the east. The rest of the district is a level alluvial plain, lowest in the centre and rising slightly towards the banks of the Meghnā and the Feni rivers on either side. The soil is a rich alluvial deposit yearly inundated and fertilised by the overflow of the rivers, and with great capacity for retaining moisture. Salt deposits are not unknown, but they have done no serious damage, as owing to the heavy rainfall and the annual inundation crops can be raised in the rainy season on lands that show a saline efflorescence in the winter. Sir Joseph Hooker wrote in 1850 that though the soil at Noākhāli yielded an abundance of salt the water of the Meghnā was only brackish, and it was only the inrush of the tidal waves that did damage. Practically the whole country is cultivated, even the great swamps which occupied the low-lying portions 30 years ago having come under the plough. Irrigation is hardly a necessity, though at the foot of the Tippera hills streams are occasionally dammed up to form a reservoir of water against the hot and dry season.

Rice is the staple crop of the district and in 1908-09 was grown on 965,000 acres, or 76 per cent of the 1,263,900 acres cropped; other food-grains, chiefly pulses, occupied some 77,000 acres only. Oil-seeds are generally grown as a second crop, the most important kinds being linseed, of which the cultivation has increased from 15,000 to 22,000 acres in the present century. Gingelly and mustard are also grown pretty generally. The cultivation of jute extended rapidly during the first years of the century, and reached the maximum of 29,500 acres in the year 1908, but the fall in price has checked its popularity and in 1910, it was sown in only 29,000 acres. A very large area, 101,000 acres, is returned as under orchards and garden produce. To the visitor from other parts of Bengal nothing is more remarkable than the rapid increase in the number of areca-nut, coco-nut and other palms as he proceeds south from Comilla. In the south and west of the Noākhāli district almost every house is surrounded with a grove of betel-nut and coco-nut trees, and in some *parganas* the people depend largely on their produce.

Cultivation.

The soil of Noākhāli requires generally little preparation. The people use a light old-fashioned plough (*nangal*), with a beam (*is*) about 6 feet long, and a wooden share; the whole outfit costing Re. 1 to Re. 1-8. The harrow (*chāgam*), shaped

like an ellipse with the ends cut off, is made of bamboo, and costs 5 to 7 annas; and a large rake with long bamboo teeth (*achra*) drawn by bullocks serves the purpose of an English horse hoe or scarifier. It costs Re. 1-4 to make. For digging the *kodāli* or *khanta* (crowbar) are used. Cows are used, as well as bullocks, for ploughing, and on the *chars* buffaloes are employed. Mr. Cumming estimates that three pairs of bullocks can plough an acre in six hours Thirty-five years ago the Collector reported that a pair of oxen would suffice for the cultivation of a 'plough' of land equal to five to six acres and that a pair of buffaloes could manage nearly twice that area.

[E]xtension of [cu]ltivation.

In 1873-74 the Collector showed the cultivated area as over 75 per cent of the total area of the district. In 1902, after a special revision of the figures, 785,000 acres, or just under 75 per cent, were found to be cultivated, and in 1907-08 the proportion had risen to very nearly 85 per cent, leaving only 700 acres of fallow and under 36,000 of waste land available for cultivation. The estimates before 1902 must have been inaccurate, and there has been a very great extension of cultivation in recent years, so that little land now fit for the plough is allowed to lie fallow. But the constant formation of new, and diluvion of old, land makes it unsafe to accept the estimates of total area and consequently those of the margin available for extension of cultivation.

[M]anure.

Rice land requires and receives little manure, except that the last year's stubble is burnt and ploughed into the land in February or March. Jute needs manuring and the cultivator gives it as much cattle dung as he can afford and often some mud dug from the bottom of a tank or ditch. For betel-nut (*supāri*) and coco-nut, paddy husks are used as manure, and the leaves of the *māndār* trees. Betel-vines (*pān*) require rich feeding and are given oil-cake.

[Ef]fect of [ra]infall [up]on crops.

It is difficult to generalise as to the effect of the amount and distribution of rainfall on the harvest, as what is good for one crop may injure another. Light intermittent showers only are required in April and May, too much rain drowning and damaging the young jute and rice. The rain should be fairly heavy and continuous from the beginning of June till the middle of August, when intervals of fine weather are required for harvesting the *āus*. Too much rain in late August, September and October injured both autumn and winter rice in 1905-06, and in 1902 the fall of 97 inches of rain in the three months June, July, August did much harm. Late rain again interferes with the ploughing of land for the cold weather crops. These require some showers about Christmas, not too early or it may damage the mustard blossom, while showers in March are beneficial and enable the land to be got ready in time for early sowings.

[Ric]e.

The Collector reports that no change has to be made in the account of the rice crop given in 1871. In Noākhāli, as else-

where, the primary division is into *āus* and *āman*, each of which comprises two distinct classes and many varieties. The first class of *āus* paddy is sown broadcast on high lands in March and April and reaped in July and August; it includes *bālām sāil*, *sāthiā*, and seven other varieties. The second class is sown during the rainy season in June and July, and is reaped in October and November. It comprises four varieties, of which *rājāsāl*, much grown on *char* lands, is always transplanted and the others are sown broadcast.

The long stemmed varieties of *āman* rice, including *jāora* and five others, are sown in low and marshy land in March and April, transplanted in June and July, and reaped in November and December.

The short stemmed paddy, comprising *chaplās*, *rupsāil*, and 31 other kinds, is sown in July and August, transplanted later, and cut in November and December.

In the west of the district it is a common practice to sow autumn and winter rice together, the mixture being known as *bājāl*, each crop being reaped as it ripens.

Several Collectors have reported *boro* rice to be grown in Noākhāli, but the returns of the Agricultural Department do not show any, and the area planted with it must be insignificant.

In spite of a succession of bad or indifferent seasons the cultivation of rice, stimulated no doubt by the high prices, has been extending with astonishing rapidity. While the returns of the year 1901-02 show only 784,000 acres under this crop, those for 1908-09 give the area cropped with rice as 965,000 acres, of which 321,000 are under autumn rice; that is, the proportion of autumn to winter rice is very nearly as 1 is to 2, whereas for the whole province the proportion is as 1 is to 3; the difference is probably due to the classification of *rājāsāl*, which is grown very extensively on *char* lands, under autumn rice. It is very difficult to estimate the total quantity of rice produced, but according to the returns of the Agricultural Department the normal outturn is 9 maunds of clean rice per acre. The estimated outturn for the year 1908-09 was about 335,000 tons, and the average for the last five years was nearly 350,000 tons. The Collector estimates that in a year of average crop the rice produced is sufficient for the comsumption of the district for two years.

Mr. Cumming during the settlement of Chakla Roshnābād caused experiments to be made and found the outturn to be from 19 to 21 maunds of paddy per acre, or, say, from 13 to 14 maunds of clean rice. On this calculation the district should produce about 450,000 tons of clean rice annually.

Other food grains, covering 77,000 acres, consist chiefly of pulses, especially *mug* (*Phaseolus mungo*), *māskalai* (*Phaseolus radiatus*), and *khesāri* (*Lathyrus sativus*). These are generally

sown after rice has been harvested from the land. *Arhar* (pigeon pea) is grown in the east of the district, chiefly as a hedge between fields.

Jute.

In 1910 jute was grown on about 29,000 acres, producing some 12,000 tons of fibre. According to the returns there has been a very rapid advance in the cultivation of this plant during the present century, but there is reason to doubt the accuracy of the figures before 1908, when a special enquiry resulted in the return of nearly three times the area of the year preceding. The jute lands have to be ploughed four or five times or more and manured as heavily as the cultivator can afford. In February or March the seed is sown broadcast at the rate of 5½ to 7 seers to the acre; it is then ploughed and harrowed over. When the young plants appear, careful weeding is necessary. In July or August the cutting begins, and it takes 14 to 16 men to cut an acre in a day; the cut stalks are tied in bundles and steeped in water under a layer of grass and brushwood for from 10 to 20 days when they should be sufficiently rotted to enable the fibre to be separated by hand. Thirteen men can in a day strip the produce of an acre. The fibre is washed and tied up in bundles of about five seers and dried on bamboo frames; while the refuse is used for fuel.

Oilseeds.

Oilseeds are very largely grown and the area devoted to them is increasing rapidly and is now about 45,000 acres. The most important of them is linseed (*tisi*) grown on some 22,000 acres and yielding from 2,000 to 3,000 tons of seed. It is sown in November on land from which rice or jute has been reaped and is harvested in February or March. Gingelly (*til*) is grown on about 14,000 acres, the area under it having nearly trebled in seven years. It is a high land crop, sown in March or April and reaped in May or June. The seed is used medicinally and taken in sweetmeats. Mustard is sown in October, generally on high lands on the river bank after an early crop of rice or jute, and reaped in October. The area under it is some 8,000 acres. There are three varieties, *rai* and the red and white *sarisha*.

Spices and condiments.

About 15,000 acres grow condiments and spices, of which chillies (*marich*) are the most important. This is a most paying crop, but grown only in small patches. It is sown in a nursery about October. The seedlings must be kept under shade for a week and regularly watered, and when a month old are planted out about 9 inches apart in a field which has been ploughed seven or eight times, harrowed three or four times, and well manured. In June the plants are plucked, and yield from 2½ to 5 maunds, which may be worth from Rs. 12 to Rs. 50 as the price varies greatly. The plucking is always done by the widows of the village, who keep from a fourth to a sixth as the wages of their labour. Coriander (*dhaniya*), onions (*piyāj*), and garlic (*rasun*), grown at the same season are also included under this head; as also turmeric

(*haldi*) which is sown in April and reaped in June. Some dyes, safflower (*kusum*), etc., are grown in minute plots. Tobacco was once grown in quantities sufficient to affect the assessment, but now only a little for private use.

Vegetables. Radishes (*mula*) are perhaps the vegetable grown most largely. They are sown at the close of the rains and come into the market from the end of November to January. Cucumbers (*sasa*), pumpkin (*kadu*), *kumra* (*Cucurbita pepo*), a small bitter gourd, *baigun* or brinjal, and *ol* (*arum*) of several varieties, are also taken as vegetables.

Sugarcane. Sugarcane was once cultivated largely in Sandwīp; and there are still 600 acres under it in that island, and about the same area in *thānā* Chhāgalnaia and Lakhipur.

Betel-vine. Betel-vine (*pān*) is grown in many places in the district, but there is no record of the number of gardens or the area. It is grown on raised beds (*bhiti*) or on the bank of a tank, and wants a soil strong though sandy. The whole bed is enclosed in a frame of grass and reeds about 7 feet high close enough to protect the plants from the heat without excluding all light and air. The soil is carefully prepared and the seedlings planted out in it about October, and when they begin to grow the vines are trained up on sticks. In the rains new earth has to be added and the plant if well looked after should last for three years bearing continually. It is grown exclusively by Bāruis, and the increase in their number is evidence of the extension of the cultivation of the vine, though only 180 persons are shown in the census tables as occupied in growing it. There is no certainty as to the outturn, but it is a very profitable though very exhausting crop.

Betel-nut. Betel-nut or *supāri* (*Areca catechu*) is one of the staple products of the district. It is found everywhere but grows most thickly towards the Meghnā on the north-west where it forms dense groves extending for miles. The area devoted to this crop has not been ascertained accurately, but it represents a large portion of the 121,000 acres of orchard.*

In Noākhāli areca palms are planted in groves of *māndār* (*Erythrina indica*) which afford them protection from wind and sun and are supposed to improve the soil and to fertilise it with their leaves. The garden is prepared by planting branches of the *māndār* 12 to 15 feet apart each way, and in two to three years on high lands and four to six years on low lands the plantation is ready for the betel seedlings.† Betel-nuts are sown in nurseries in October or November, and two years later, sometimes three or four years, the seedlings are transplanted in July into high lands, or in February or April into low lands. In the first transplanting

* The figure 25,000 for the acreage under orchards given in the Statistical Table VII was based on a wrong classification.

† This account is based on an article by Sir George Watt, No. 8 in the Agricultural Ledger, for 1901.

the young palms are placed midway between the *māndār* trees and are thus 12 to 15 feet apart. But before these palms come into bearing, the *māndār* trees are cut down, all but a fringe round the groves, and their place taken by a second lot of areca palms, which in a fully planted grove thus stand about 6 or 7 feet apart.* Trees planted singly may come into bearing when only six or seven years of age, but in plantations they rarely fruit before the tenth or twelfth year, while the second lot of plants do not come into bearing for 20 years. The fruiting life of a tree is estimated at from 30 to 60 years, and its total life at from 60 to 100 years.

In 1896 the attention of Government was drawn to a plague that was devastating the plantations in Noākhāli and Bākarganj. A similar disease had appeared on previous occasions, but this outbreak started about the year 1892. Its attacks were confined to the cold weather and its symptoms were the withering of the leaves followed by the decay of the terminal bud and finally by the fall of the crown of leaves. Sir George Watt diagnosed the plague as *tyloses*, due to the want of sufficient moisture. The remedy was in his opinion more careful cultivation with better drainage and irrigation, more space between the trees, and leaving the *māndār* in the plantation. The disease however disappeared as mysteriously as it had come, and there is now none in the district. There are various estimates of the outturn of betel-nuts. In 1830 the Collector of Tippera reported that certain estates near the Noākhāli border had been settled on an estimate of the produce of the *supāri* trees, which was that a *kāni* contained 500 trees yielding 100 *kāhans* of nuts worth Rs. 80. The *kāhan* was 6 seers 6 chataks, but the *kāni* in that locality varied from about 1½ to 3 acres. In 1896 Mr. Nitya Gopal Mukherji of the Agricultural Department estimated the produce on the Mania estate at 8 to 15 maunds per *kāni*, say 5 to 9 maunds an acre, which is now worth from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100. It is sold in three states, *viz*:—

(1) *Khari* when after being plucked from the tree the fruit is steeped in water for a week, shelled, and the nut dried in the sun. In this state it is bought in in October-November by traders from Chittagong for the consumption of the Maghs. (2) Ātā, and (3) tāti.—These are more dried and prepared and are exported to western districts.

Coco-nut.

Coco-nut (*nārikel*) is grown extensively in the centre and west of the district and in Sandwīp and is often interspersed in the plantations of areca palm. The tree is raised from seed sown in high lands, generally on the banks of a tank or on the sides of the homestead, at the beginning of the rainy season and begins to bear fruit in its fifth year. Coco-nuts, both ripe and unripe, are consumed largely in the district, more by Hindus than by

* This is taken from Dr. Watt's report, but the Collector informs me that the trees in a grove are more often 1½ to 3 feet apart.

Muhammadans, and are exported by river to Chittagong and elsewhere. Coco-nut oil is prepared locally in small quantities, and *hukkas* are made from the shell, and the stem is used for beams and rafters.

The toddy palm (*tāl*) is to be seen all through the *sadr* subdivision. It is not tapped for its juice, but the fruit is greatly appreciated; the thick reddish juice which it yields when ripe is used in sweetmeats, and the soft kernel (*phoprā*) of the mature nut is eaten also. The stem is used for posts and for small dugouts (*kunda*) that ply on inland *khāls*. *Other fruit trees.*

There are a good many date palms (*khajur*). The fruit does not ripen well, but the tree is tapped for the juice which is made into molasses. This is not a very important or profitable industry.

Mangoes are plentiful, but the fruit is among the worst in Bengal being infested with insects. Jack fruit does not do as well as in districts further from the sea. The plantains are fair and are exported in considerable quantities from Rāmganj and Raipur. Oranges and limes of excellent quantity grow in the north-west near Lakhipur, and as they ripen in October or November find a ready market. The tamarind, *papaya*, *badām* (Indian almond), *jalpai* (Indian olive), and several other fruits are also found in the district.

The cattle of the district are small but compare favourably enough with those of the rest of Eastern Bengal. Although there are few lands reserved for pasturage except *chars* not yet fit for the plough, the cattle get a certain amount of grazing on the roadsides and on the ridges which separate the fields, and appear on the whole to be fairly well fed. *Cattle.*

No census of the cattle in the whole district has been made, but in tracts surveyed during the years 1892—1908 (about 192 square miles) the number of cattle found averaged just under 400 to the square mile. Of these, about one-twelfth were buffaloes, and a tenth calves, while among the rest five bulls or bullocks are found to every two cows.

Rinderpest is common in the district. In 1874—75 it was recorded that 20,522 head of cattle were attacked, and only 2,409 recovered; 2,542 cattle died in 1903; in 1908-09 the deaths reported were 1,095, of which 1,077 were due to rinderpest. Cases of anthrax also occur, and occasionally foot and mouth disease and hæmorrhagic septicæmia. There is a dispensary at Noākhāli in charge of a civil veterinary assistant. He treated 501 cases in the year 1908-09, and over 3,000 animals were inoculated by assistants deputed to the interior during the outbreak of rinderpest in that year. There are a good many goats in the villages—during the surveys about one was enumerated for every ten acres measured—and the Muhammadan peasantry keep a number of fowls and ducks.

CHAPTER VII.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

Cyclones.

Thanks to the abundant and regular rainfall and the annual inundation of the rivers, the district is practically free from drought. The eastern portion between the great and little Feni rivers is liable to suffer from the overflow of the hill streams after heavy rain, but the water subsides rapidly and the damage caused is rarely very serious. But the islands and all the south of the mainland are exposed to the cyclones which sweep across the Bay of Bengal, driving the waters before them in great waves which sometimes overflow wide tracts of country, drowning men and cattle, destroying the crops, and often leaving behind them a residue of salt which interferes with cultivation for some time. In the year 1797 there was such a cyclone, described as the most destructive in the memory of men.

In 1822, and again in 1825 and 1848 much damage was done by floods. In November 1867 Hātiā island was entirely submerged by a storm wave, and sea-drift was found on the embankments in its interior four feet above the level of the country; but the destruction caused by the great cyclone of 31st October 1876 far surpassed that of any other of which record exists.

Cyclone of 1876.

For two days the sky had been threatening, drizzling rain falling at intervals, and clouds flying inland before an east wind. Late in the evening of the 31st the wind changed to the north and north-east, and blew with tremendous violence, uprooting some trees and breaking off others. In Noākhāli every mud or mat-walled building was levelled to the ground, and only one Deputy Collector's court remained standing. Those trees which stood against the storm were stripped of their leaves, and their branches broken and scattered. Early in the morning a tidal wave, at least six feet high, burst over Sandwīp and Hātiā from the south-east, and was followed very shortly by another wave six feet higher from the south-west. The waves swept across the islands lifting roofs from the houses and whirling away the débris. On the outskirts of the island, where there were few trees and the people lived in detached houses, nearly all were drowned before they had time to escape. Further inland where the houses clustered together in villages surrounded by groves, many of the inhabitants were saved by being caught in the thorny branches of the *māndār*. About four in the morning the wave reached the mainland and swept over it for some miles from the shore; at 7 o'clock the water in the main streets of Noākhāli was still 3½ feet deep and running with a strong current, carrying along broken fragments of houses and shops. It was at first believed

that 100,000 persons had been drowned in Noākhāli and the islands, but further examination showed these figures to be excessive, and the final estimate of the number of deaths from drowning was 36,324. But the pollution of tanks and water-courses both by salt water inundation and by the corpses of men and carcases of cattle left without burying or cremation brought on an epidemic of cholera, while another storm of wind and rain on the 23rd November, the "ghost," as the people called it, "of the cyclone," added much to the misery of the homeless people. Cholera accounted for over 49,000 deaths, and it is probably safe to put down the total number of lives lost in the cyclone and from its sequelæ at 100,000.

Cyclones of 1893 and 1895.

On the morning of the 27th October 1893 another cyclone burst on Noākhāli. The wind blew with great violence between 10 and 12 A.M., when there was an hour's lull, after which it blew again from the opposite quarter. There was no storm wave like that of 1876, but the waters banked up by the force of the wind rose gradually, overflowing the coast of Hātiā and the opposite mainland. The inundation subsided in about two hours, and as it took place in the daytime and the rise of the water was gradual, most people had time to save themselves, though a few who were in boats or in exposed *chars* were drowned; but nearly 5,000 cattle (mostly buffaloes) were lost, and the crops in the tracts of Bāmni and Sudhārām were seriously damaged by the brackish water. In Hātiā and further up the coast the water was fresh, and the damage to the crops estimated at not more than two annas to four annas. In the islands the damage done to houses was slight, but on the mainland three-quarters of those in the track of cyclone were blown down; all the thatched houses in the Noākhāli Collectorate and all the public buildings in Feni, except the inspection bungalow, were blown away, and about half the betel-nut trees and an even larger proportion of the *māndār* trees were destroyed. The cyclone was followed by an outbreak of cholera in the south-east of the district. Again, in October 1895, a cyclone struck the district, causing a good deal of damage to the crops and trees, and drowning a large number of cattle on the *chars*. Those cyclones were followed by a plague among the *supāri* trees which is described elsewhere.

Earthquake.

The district lies outside the main earthquake zone and does not appear to have suffered much since the great earthquake of 1762, to which is popularly attributed the lowering of the level of the *bils* in Begamganj *thānā*. In 1897 the shock of the earthquake that did such great damage in the Surma Valley was sharply felt, but caused little injury.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

History. In the eighteenth century there were few roads in the district, and such as existed were in very bad order.

Mr. Thomas Parr, Collector of Tippera, which then included the main land of Noākhāli, reported in 1794 that the roads leading to the southern parts were at all seasons of the year very bad, and that the only one passable in the rains extended but 10 miles from Comilla. There were indeed the remains of many old roads and embankments but so neglected that they had become impassable in the rainy season, and even in the dry season were obstructed by many unbridged gaps.

From Rennells's map and lists it appears that before 1790 A.D. roads were in existence, extending from Lakhipur on the Meghnā to Chāndpur, Comilla, Coliandi and Jagdia; while through the east of the district ran the Chittagong road, and one from Comilla to Khandal (*i.e.*, Chhāgalnāia). There were ferries over the Dākātiā and great and little Feni rivers; but many streams were unprovided with any means of crossing.

The military authorities at Chittagong were continually representing the inconvenience and danger caused by the absence of properly bridged roads, and Mr. Elliott, when Magistrate of the district, made great improvements, but in 1819 we find Colonel Sherwood reporting that the Chittagong-Dāūdkāndi road (the trunk road) was impassable in the rainy season and had been cut through in many places, and that even such bridges as existed were unfit to carry a gun-carriage; while the Jurerganj-Lakhipur road had been reduced in parts to a width of only 4 or 5 feet.

Up to that time there seems to have been an impression that the *zamīndārs* were responsible for the maintenance of communications, but it was ascertained that no such duty was imposed on them by the agreements they had executed, and by a Resolution, dated the 20th November 1820, the Governor-General in Council formally absolved the land-owners from being called upon to furnish any aid or to incur any expenses for maintaining the roads, and at the same time a special officer was appointed to draw up a scheme and prepare estimates for the construction of the roads required.

Very little was done until the proceeds of the Ferry fund were placed at the disposal of the Magistrates. In 1855 when a programme of works was called for there were only three roads with an aggregate length of 70 miles passable for hackeries. The allotment of 1856-57 was Rs. 12,400 and in the next year only Rs. 5,000, and most of this was spent on bridges.

In 1872-73 it was reported that the land communications extended to 226 miles, that there were fifteen ferries and that the total extent of the waterway in the district was 340 miles.

Most of the principal roads now in existence had then been constructed, but they were sadly in want of bridges and some were in very bad repair. The northern half of the Begamganj-Lāksām road had not been bridged. The old Lakhipur road, running eastward from the bank of the Meghnā to Begamganj and then on to the Chittagong road, had been much neglected, and was overgrown with jungle.

Roads.

The district is now remarkably well supplied with roads. The provincial trunk road from Dacca to Chittagong passes through the centre of the Feni sub-division and the District Board maintains 397 miles of main roads, and 255 miles of village roads, making a total of 652 miles, without taking into account the numerous small paths connecting hamlets with the public roads. The people generally show a good deal of enterprise in making such connections and there are few hamlets that have no pathway leading to the nearest road.

Expenditure.

The average annual expenditure on roads for the five years ending 1904-05 was Rs. 50,000 and in 1908-09 the District Board spent Rs. 79,000 on communications, of which Rs. 46,000 was on original works and the rest for maintenance. Many of the roads are on lands that have never been acquired, either because they were excluded from the *māl* lands of estates in the Permanent Settlement, or because they have been given by the proprietors for use as roads, without consideration. Much care has been taken in planting trees by the roadside, and the Board own about 4,000 mahogany trees besides numbers of *sissu*, almond, *jārul*, *mahwā* and mango. The "Silk Oak" is said to do particularly well, and there are fine rows of casuarina about the civil station. There are only 12 miles of metalled roadway, but the surface of the others is better than in most districts of Bengal, and in some places the traffic is maintained over unbridged rivers and water channels, by ferries. When the rain has been exceptionally heavy it is customary to cut, or allow the villagers to cut, channels through the roadway to let the water escape; but the damage is generally repaired before the cold weather is established. From the headquarters of the district good roads branch east to Feni and Chittagong, north through Begamganj to Comilla, and in a north-westerly direction to Lakhipur and the important markets on the Meghnā. Besides these, the old road running east and west through Begamganj passes through the whole length of the centre of the district, and the Feni sub-division has its own system of roads running generally north and south.

Trunk Road.

The first place must be assigned to the Dacca-Chittagong Trunk Road, of which a length of 14 miles lies in the Feni sub-division, which it nearly bisects passing through Feni station

and Diwānganj. This road is maintained by the Local Government; it is not metalled except for a short length at Feni but is bridged throughout the sub-division, the Feni river on the border being crossed by a ferry.

Old Begamganj Road. The road from the Meghnā through Lakhipur and Begamganj to the river Feni formerly extended to Chittagong, but the eastern part has been abandoned and to a great extent cultivated while the western end was washed away by the Meghnā which encroached near Lakhipur before it receded.

Feni Road. Next ranks the Feni-Noākhāli road, 26 miles long with a crest of 18 feet on an average, bridged except at the 3rd and 22nd miles where there are ferries over the Noākhāli Khāl and the Little Feni river. Starting from the head-quarters station it goes in a north-easterly direction until it meets the Chittagong Trunk Road. A good bridged road leads on a distance of 16 miles to Pashurām, and from there Captain Leake's road leads to Chhāgalnāia and thence to the Great Feni. There are inspection bungalows at the 10th and 17th miles of the Feni road and at Pashurām and Chhāgalnāia.

Chittagong Road. From the 6th mile of the Feni road the Chittagong road, 17 miles long, runs through the south of the district, past Companyganj, to Lālganj ferry on the big Feni. There is a wide ferry over the Little Feni, and between this and Sonāgāzi Chaprāsi's Hāt, where there is a rest-house, the road has been washed away.

Begamganj Road. From Noākhāli the Begamganj road, 14 feet wide, runs along the west of the Khāl for nearly 9 miles to Begamganj, a place of importance in the centre of the district, where there is a bungalow. From there the road leads to Lāksām and so on to Comilla and Chāndpur, but there are five *khāls* crossed only by temporary bridges in the 8 miles that lie in Noākhāli.

Bhawāniganj Road. From just outside the head-quarters station the Bhawāniganj road runs west by north to the Bhawāniganj *khāl* 18 miles away. It is bridged and has an inspection bungalow at the 10th mile; a continuation 5 miles long carries one on to Lakhipur, and from there the Dalāl Bazar road runs three miles to Dalāl Bazar, where it branches, one branch running north-west 6 miles to Rāipur on the Dākātiā and so to Chāndpur, and the other almost due north to Rāmganj, 10 miles. These roads are bridged and drained and there are bungalows at Lakhipur, Rāipur and Rāmganj.

Mr. Leake's Road. About 20 miles, built about 1781 A.D., starts from *thānā* Chauddagrām in Tippera and runs in this district through Pashurām and Chhāgalnāia up to the side of the Great Feni river.

These are but the main arteries of the road system of the district, and there are also roads right through the islands of Sandwīp and Hātiā, and many cross roads.

Rivers. The Dākātiā, the Meghnā and its branches, the big and little Feni, with their tributaries, the Muhuri and Seloneāh as well

as the Bhawānigarh Mohendra and Noākhāli *khāls* are all used for navigation, and between them afford some 430 miles of waterway.

Steamers run daily from the Noākhāli *khāl* to Hātiā and Sandwīp, completing the round in 12 to 18 hours according to the tide. For this service the India General Railway and Steam Navigation Company receive a monthly subsidy from the District Board. Another service runs four days a week between Noākhāli and Barisāl, touching at Hātiā, and three days in the week the Barisāl-Chittagong steamers call at the islands. There is also a steamer service between Bhawāniganj and Barisāl.

Canals.

But in the rains the people depend chiefly upon the numerous narrow channels, *khāl* or *donā*, for communication and transport. Of these there are a great number, some natural, some artificial. The latter mostly have not been excavated expressly for the passage of boats, but are simply the trenches from which earth has been taken to raise the roadway above flood-level.

In 1893 the District Board took charge of the inland waterways and the latest returns now show 57 channels large and small with a total length of 547 miles, including 33 miles of the Muhuri river. Of these the more important are the Begamganj-Lakhipur road side channel 22 miles long, the Mohendra *Khāl* 45 miles long from Naudona to the Meghnā (much overgrown with weeds near Naudona), the Begamganj-Seloneāh drain from Begamganj to the little Feni river and the Begamganj-Rāmganj drain 25 miles long. None of these are navigable except in the rains, and the last named can even then take only small boats, but all of them are much used.

Ferries.

The ferries of the district are under the control of the District Board. There are now 46 over the principal rivers and channels and between the islands. Hātiā is served by two ferries, both starting from Lambakhāli in *thānā* Sudharām, and Sandwīp by a ferry that crosses to Siddhi from Bhānubibi. There are regular ferries connecting Chars Jabar and Jubilee with the mainland. The ferries over the big Feni are under Chittagong. The large ferries are served by *bālām* boats about 32 feet long by 7¼ feet wide and capable of taking from 60 to 80 passengers. The Tejania Nālchira ferry has two boats measuring 36 feet by 9 feet but licensed only for 40 passengers owing to the dangerous character of the crossing.

Railways.

In 1896 the Assam-Bengal Railway from Chittagong to Lāksām passing through Feni, the eastern sub-division of the district, was opened for traffic, and in 1903 a branch line was constructed from Lāksām to Noākhāli station. This line brought the head-quarters of the district into communication with the port of Chāndpur, from which steamers run in all directions, while Feni is only 4¼ hours' run from Chittagong. Both lines are used for passenger as well as goods traffic and have been of immense assistance to the people in disposing of their surplus produce.

Rest-houses. The District Board maintains 26 inspection bungalows and rest-houses along the principal roads of the district. Most of them are temporary structures with walls of matting and wooden-doors and containing two rooms. There is also a new circuit house at Noākhāli—occupied at present as the Collector's residence—and a *dāk* bungalow maintained by the District Board. At Feni there is a P. W. D. inspection bungalow.

Conveyances. Carts are now in general use throughout the district, and as soon as a new road is opened to traffic the people living near it will buy wheels and themselves put together rude carts in which they drive their bullocks. The wheels are made of a local wood (*karai*), which serves also for stools and other articles of furniture. Ponies are rare, and pack bullocks are not used. Fish and milk are carried in vessels or baskets slung from a bamboo (*bānk*) carried on the shoulder. Other articles are usually carried on the head. Those who cannot walk travel in carts or palanquins, or on a seat (*dhuli*) slung from a bamboo carried by two men.

Boats. But in the rainy season boats afford the principal means of transport for men and merchandise.

Muhammadan boatmen use generally the *kundā*, a heavy canoe made from the trunk of a large tree, and usually covered for a considerable part of its length by two or three strips of matting bent over to form a semi-circular roof. A smaller dug-out known as a *tengi* is used in the flooded fields for going to market or reaping crops. Another common boat is the *sharanga* built of planks fastened together and flat bottomed so as to draw as little water as possible, and sometimes enlarged with side planks and roofed with bamboo matting. It is propelled with short oars or paddles fastened near the bow, or is poled in shallow waters, or towed, and may be of any size from a little skiff for a single person to a big boat carrying 100 maunds and requiring three men to manage it. In the Meghnā a longer and more slender boat known as a *gāshi* boat is found, and in the estuary an altogether larger boat known as the *bālām*. The *bālām* is built from a solid bottom with planks fastened together with cane and caulked with false hemp or straw soaked with the juice of the *gāb* tree. These boats are made in Chittagong or Sandwīp, and carry 200—300 maunds and require a crew of from five to seven men. When not required, the fastenings are undone and the planks put away carefully. They have large square sails with which they go merrily before the wind, but cannot sail near the wind, and have to be poled and paddled, a most laborious process. Occasionally *kosh* boats from Dacca may be seen, and the Chittagong boatmen come in broad sterned *sāmpāns*. The best boats are made in Chittagong or Sandwip with *jārul* or *chaplās* wood brought from the Chittagong hills, but light dug-outs are sometimes made locally from the stem of the toddy palm.

CHAPTER IX.

OCCUPATIONS, MANUFACTURES AND TRADES.

It is to be feared that Census Table 15, showing the occupations of the people of the district, is far from accurate, but some interesting facts may be gleaned from the study of it. We find that of every ten inhabitants three are workers, and support the remaining seven. More than 79 per cent of the population depend on agriculture; excluding dependants, there are some 6,000 rent-receivers, and 225,000 rent-payers, besides 8,000 agricultural labourers, and 5,000 herdsmen. Possibly we should add to these a large proportion of the 25,000 persons described as general labourers.

Next to agriculture, fishing is the most important industry of the district. Only 222 persons have described themselves as fishermen, but there are over 7,500 sellers of fish. It is notorious that fishing is a despised occupation, and it may safely be said that many of the fish-dealers are really fishermen, and that a good many of the agriculturists are employed largely in fishing, though less than a thousand have admitted that this is their subsidiary occupation. Some 9,000 persons, of whom nearly one-fourth are women, find occupation in spinning and weaving, and of these more than 2,000 hold land. There are 1,300 potters, of whom 500 are women, over 1,000 carpenters, and less than 500 masons. Boatmen and sailors number nearly 1,000, but there are only 56 cartmen, though carts are in general use. *Pālki* bearers number over 400, and it is well known that *pālkis* are much used by women and infirm persons. There are about 2,700 priests, and over 800 medical practitioners, of whom only two are said to have diplomas. Perhaps the most curious feature of the tables is the almost entire absence of certain professions. There are no pig-breeders and swine herds, and only two persons are shown as growers of fruits and vegetables. There are but 22 boat builders, which bears out the statement that nearly all boats are imported ready made from Chittagong. The district has to support 17,000 professional mendicants.

The production of salt from the salt impregnated lands of the islands and the southern coast was in former times a most important industry. Mr. Duncan in his report on Sandwīp states that down to the year 1728 salt was manufactured for the benefit of the *chaudhris*, and was then converted in the time of Murshīd Kuli Khān into the private monopoly of the Naib of the Subah. In 1765 the East India Company granted the monopoly of the production of salt, betel-nut and tobacco, to the Trading Company, who were to pay a duty of 35 per cent of the value of the salt produced. Three years later the monopoly was withdrawn on the *Salt.*

ground that the inland trade of the country should be confined to its native inhabitants. Then for a few years the manufacture was open to any one, but in 1772 it was resolved that salt should be manufactured by the Company, and that the calaries in each district should be let in farm for five years. In the five years ending in 1776 over 130,000 maunds of salt were produced annually on the lands of *pargana* Sandwīp. At that time the manufacture seems to have been in charge of Sir John Forbes, Agent at Chittagong. In 1780 the lands of Bhulua, Dakshin Shāhbāzpur, Sandwīp, Hātiā and Bāmni were constituted the Fifth Salt Division in charge of an Agent at Bhulua, and this arrangement seems to have continued for the next thirty years. In the year 1819 Mr. Walters found the average annual production of salt to be a lakh of maunds in Hātiā, rather more in Mankura, 20,000 maunds in Sandwīp, 21,000 in Bāmni, and 60,000 maunds in other islands in the Meghnā. Altogether the production was over three lakhs of maunds, and gave employment to upwards of 20,000 persons, but soon afterwards the salt lands in Bāmni were given up, and in 1826 it was recorded that they were becoming sweet. Sir William Hunter records that the manufacture was continued down to about 1862, but no correspondence on the subject of its abandonment is to be found.

Fisheries.

In the course of the year 1909 an enquiry into the fisheries of the district was made by a Sub-Deputy Collector specially deputed for the purpose, and the account which follows is based mainly on his report. Along the west and south of the district flows the Meghnā, bearing at all seasons of the year a mighty volume of water past the rivers to the sea. It has many branches winding in and out through the islands, and the mainland itself is intersected in all directions by rivers aud water channels, and in the interior there are still many *bils*, or shallow lakes more or less perennial, while for three or four months of the year the greater part of the district is submerged, and the fish swarm all over the rice-fields where they spawn and hatch out their fry. And yet the fisheries are not so valuable or so prolific as in many districts farther from the sea, and the supply of fish is not nearly equal to the demand. Several causes contribute to this state of affairs. In the first place, the deep sea fisheries are practically closed to the people, as they have no boats in which they dare venture out, and even the island channels at the mouth of the Meghnā, with their treacherous tides, are avoided except by the hardiest of the fishermen. Also the want of more rapid means of communication prevents fishermen from going far from their market except in the cold weather, and fish-curing, with or without salt, is unknown. Still the fisheries are of importance and according to the census returns more than 24,000 persons depend upon fishing or the selling of fish for their livelihood, and these figures take no account of the vast number of people who at the close of the

rains, as the waters recede, catch fish for home consumption in their own fields and ditches with bamboo traps or dams and other simple contrivances. Among the fishing castes the Kaibarttas, Jele Kaibarttas as they are called to distinguish them from the Hāliā Kaibarttas or cultivators, who now prefer to call themselves Mahisya, come first in numbers and importance. Most of them have a little cultivation as well. The Namasudras also include many fishermen. The most venturesome of all the fishermen in the district are the Mālos or Jhālos, who live chiefly on the islands or on the coast of the mainland, but they are few in number, only 905 having been found in the census.

The methods of fishing and the instruments employed are many and varied. Of fixed engines the most familiar is the *bendi jāl*, consisting of a line of nets fastened across a tidal channel and leading to a basket trap of split bamboos; or a submerged sandbank may be surrounded with a bamboo or net enclosure, called *ber* or *chali*, which confines the fish as the tide recedes. Again, *bāndhs*, or plain screens of split bamboos, are to be seen fastened across nearly every water-course, often seriously obstructing the passage of boats. Of nets the commonest are the cast nets, or *jhānki*, made in various sizes and of various meshes, and the *behāl* or *dharma jāl*, two very similar nets, one triangular and the other quadrangular, fixed to a bamboo lever by means of which they are lowered into the water and raised again when a fish passes. Drag nets of different makes with or without pockets are worked with the help of boats, and sometimes the fishermen trawl a kind of net called *moi*, and in the shallows handnets not unlike those used on the English coasts for shrimping (*dharma jāl* or *jele jāl*) are employed. Besides these, there are several kinds of "gill" nets, known generally by the name of the fish for the capture of which they are adapted. Of purse nets a good example is the *suti jāl*, in the shape of a long funnel which is kept open by the stream. Down this funnel the fish drift and are entangled in the narrow end, from which they are taken from time to time by the fishermen. In shallow waters a cane basket shaped like a bell jar with an open neck (*polo*) is often used. It is plunged suddenly into the water and the fish found inside are taken out by hand through the opening at the top. Fish are also speared with the *konch* or *tentha* and are caught with a rod and line or with set lines. For the *koi* a fine split bamboo is used instead of a hook. The bamboo is bent, and its sharp ends are kept in position by means of the grass-hopper used as bait, and when a fish swallows this the points are released and spring apart piercing his gullet. As a rule the boats used for fishing are dugouts, (*kundā*, *dongā*, or *gāchh*) made from the trunks of palm, mango, sāl, chaplās, simul and other trees, hollowed out. The *sharanga* is a larger and more shapely boat requiring two men to work it, but is also fashioned from a scooped out trunk.

ish. The list of the varieties of fish caught in the district is too long to find place in this volume. The members of the carp tribe (Cyprinidæ), *ruhit* (Labeo ruhita), *katāl* (Catla Buchanani), *mrigāl* (Cyrrhiria mrigala), and *kalabāus* (Labeo calbasu) are plentiful and occupy the first place in popular estimation. Of other varieties the *chapila* (Clupea chapra), *phalai* (Notoptonis kapirat), *chital* (Notoptonis chitala), *pābda* (Callichrous paoda), *bachā* (Entropiichthys vacha), *bole* (Gobius giuris and Gobius kokins), *jaki* or *gani* (Ophiocephalus punctatus), *sol* (Ophiocephalus striatus), *jengra* (macrones of several kinds), *magur* (Clarious magur), *singi* (Saccobranchus fossilis) and *koi* (Anabas scandens or climbing perch) are thought to be good eating. The last three are in great demand as nourishing food for invalids. Of estuarine fish the most esteemed are the *rishya* or *topsi* (Polynemus paradiscus) commonly known as the mango fish, the *bhetki* or *korāl* (Lates calcarifar), the *bata* or *khoshrul* (Mugil corsula) and the *hilsa* (Clupeo ilisha), of which the first three are common. The *hilsa* is becoming scarce and it is said that those caught at the mouth of the Meghnā are not so good to eat as those from the higher reaches of the river. *Muralla*, *punti*, *kholisha* and *chela* are small fish and are found all over the district in great abundance, and though not so much relished as the choicer species, make up between them the major part of the fish consumed in the district. Prawns, crayfish (*ichha*), and crabs, are caught in numbers and always find a ready sale. It is impossible to state accurately the total weight or value of the annual catch, but the report puts it at about 300,000 maunds, or enough to allow each fish-eating member of the community an ounce a day. This is nothing like equal to the demand, and there is a general impression that the supply is diminishing, and this is accounted for chiefly by the contraction of the fishing grounds owing to the steady silting up of the water channels and to the reclamation of swamps. Nearly all the extensive marshes which existed thirty years ago in the centre of the district have been reclaimed and the formation of *char* Jabar between the larger islands and the mainland, and the increase of the banks in the Meghnā seems to have interfered with fishing in the estuary. The report suggests that the wholesale destruction of fry involved in the methods by which fish are caught is partly responsible. It would be difficult to regulate the methods of capture or to place any restriction on the size of fish caught, but the tanks found in every village might afford the means of replenishing the supply of at least the more valuable species. Carp are said not to breed in tanks, but the young thrive well when put in, and a good many private tanks are periodically restocked with fry, generally young carp brought from Chittagong, but the practice is not so universal as it ought to be, and unfortunately the tank is too often drained dry every year, which means of course the destruction of all the immature fish.

Weaving

In the year 1756 a cloth factory was established by the East India Company at Jagdia, near the mouth of the Feni river, and about the same time or soon afterwards other factories were started at Kalyāndi (Colinda), Lakhipur, and Charpātā, while the French also had a factory near Jagdia. In these factories cotton cloth, known as *bafta*, was manufactured. The indigenous cloth seems to have been inferior, for in a letter written by the Chittagong Council on the 16th February 1761 it is thus described * :—
"The manufacture of this country is at present very indifferent, all piece-goods being of a thick woolly quality in no way durable, and short in length and breadth. This may be improved by making the combs of the looms closer, spinning the thread harder and more even, and striking them fuller." Cotton of poor quality was grown in the hills and also in Sandwīp, and in the early correspondence we find the Company much concerned in the means for improving it by the introduction of new seed or improved cultivation. Down to the year 1820 the industry appears to have flourished. Mr. Walters found many weavers in Bāmni and Sandwīp, and cotton was then grown in the islands, though the principal factory was at Lakhipur in the west of the district. After that, owing, it is said, to the competition of English piece-goods, the industry declined, and about 1828 the factories were closed. In 1876-77 it was reported that *dhutis*, *sāris*, *gamchas*, and other cotton cloths were made in small quantities for local use, but that the importation of cheap English piece-goods had reduced considerably the local manufactures. Of late years, however, there has been some revival. Besides the ordinary *sāris* and *dhutis* of coarse white cotton, checks and coloured cloths, both thick and thin, suitable for coats, shirts, etc., are woven. *Lungis* of superior quality in fast colours are being made in Noākhāli, and compete successfully with those imported from Holland and Burma. A species of coloured *sāri*, known as *jām sāri*, is now much in vogue among Muhammadan women, and is woven in the district, or imported from Mainamāti. It is said that about one thousand rupees worth of these *sāris* is sold on every *hāt* day at Chaumuhani †. The mosquito nets of Chaumuhani, white and coloured, have also a great reputation. Unfortunately, taking advantage of the increased demand for their goods, the weavers of Noākhāli have tried to impose upon the public cloths of inferior yarn, to the great injury of their trade. All local cloth is made with imported yarn, chiefly from the Bombay mills.

Iron and steel work.

From Mr. Jackson's Monograph on the iron and steel work of Bengal, it appears that he found 150 forges in Noākhāli

---

* Cotton's Revenue History of Chittagong, page 161.

† Survey of Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam for 1907-08.

employing 600 persons. As a rule the work turned out is of the roughest, but at Dattapārā cutlery of fair quality is manufactured.*

Brass, copper and bell-metal. The brass and bell-metal utensils made in the district are of inferior quality.

Mats and baskets. Excellent baskets of many shapes and qualities are made from reed and cane, and in the east of the district very fine *pātis* or mats are prepared from a plant known as *mortāg* or *murtā*.

Imports and exports. The external trade of the district is carried on by rail, steamer, country boats, and carts, and as statistics are available only for the first two of these, it is impossible to give any estimate of the total trade of the district. The chief imports are piece-goods, of which according to the published returns for the year 1908-09 about three-quarters are of European make, salt, kerosine oil, mustard oil, tobacco, sugar, brass and bell-metal articles, china and earthenware, and betel-leaves. Coal and coke also are imported in considerable quantities, and the latter is gradually coming into use for cooking, as fuel becomes more scarce. The chief export of the district is rice, most of which is carried to Calcutta by river. Next to this come betel-nuts, which are sent to Chittagong, Calcutta, and other districts, and from the markets in the north-west of the district considerable quantities of betel-nut paper (the inner skin of the sheaf covering the bunches of nuts) are sent to Burma where they are used to make wrappers for cheroots. This trade is in the hands of Burmese and a special enquiry made in 1908 showed that some 430 maunds of this substance, which sells at about two annas a seer had been exported from Sonaimura and Chaumuhani. Other articles exported are coco-nuts, linseed, chillies, onions, hides, fowls' eggs, raw cotton, and jute. The recorded exports of jute in 1908-09 were 212,477 maunds, a figure far in excess of that for any previous year.

Marts. The chief marts and the principal objects of trade in the district are:—

(1) Rāipur on the Dākātiā: export of betel-nut, chillies, oranges, limes and plantains.

(2) Chaumuhani on the railway and only a mile from Begamganj *thānā*: jute, linseed, eggs, rice, oranges, and country cloth.

(3) Nadona in the north of the district connected with Noākhāli and Lāksām by road and waterways: rice and plantains.

(4) Lakhipur in the west of the district: a large business in molasses.

(5) Bhawāniganj in the south-east, connected by steamer with Barisāl: betel-nuts and *pān* as well as molasses and other articles; ranks next after Raipur and Chaumuhani.

---

* Survey of Industry and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-08

(6) Sāntāsitā in Sudharām *thānā*: cattle, betel-nuts, coconuts, rice, chillies, etc.
(7) Chāprāsir Hāt on the *khāl* of that name: a large cattle market.
(8) Sonāgāzi in *thānā* Feni: timber, rice, linseed, and chillies.
(9) Pashurām in *thānā* Chhāgalnāia: fine mats and rice; famous for its *chirā*.
(10) Chāri Ānir Hāt, the principal mart of Sandwip: coconuts.

In 1886 a considerable sum of money was raised, and a successful Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition was held in Sudharām. In 1904 again a sum of money raised for the purpose of a memorial to Queen Victoria was devoted to an exhibition, and this was continued for two years more until funds ran low. In March 1910 an agricultural exhibition was held in Sudharām and proved a success. *Exhibitions.*

CHAPTER X.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

Fiscal divisions.

There is no record of the system of revenue administration before Noākhāli came under Muhammadan influence, and not much information is to be had before the middle of the eighteenth century. Though Bhulua was included in the revenue assessment of Akbar's minister, Todar Mal, in the year 1582, it is obvious from what has been said already that the Mughal governors were not then in a position to collect revenue from it. During the next 150 years Bhulua, originally an undivided Hindu *rāj*, became completely Muhammadanised and was split up into a number of *parganas* or fiscal divisions.

The origin of some of these *parganas* is obscure, but in a few cases it is possible to trace their history. Jagdia, Dāndra, and Allahābād, were all at one time part of Bhulua, but after the defeat of the Arakanese in the year 1610 two generals, one Hindu and one Muhammadan, were appointed to guard the frontiers against invasion, and received grants of land, that given to the Hindu became in course of time *pargana* Jagdia, and the other being again divided formed the two *parganas* of Dāndra and Allahābād, which were treated as one estate. Kanchanpur is said to have been carved out of Bhulua and Singhergān by the Emperor Feroz Shāh and given to the Muhammadan *Pīr* Khandkar Mīr Ahmad; while Ambarābād, then covered with jungle, was granted by Muhammad Shāh to Amānulla and Sanāulla Khān of Delhi at the instance of *Pīr* Ambar Shāh.

In the revised revenue roll of Bengal for the year 1728 we find Bhulua divided into eleven *parganas* or estates, which with the islands of Sandwīp and its appurtenances formed part of Chakla Jahāngirnagar in the province of Dacca.

Each of these *parganas* was assigned to one or more persons, who under the designation of *zamīndār*, *chaudhri*, or *dīwān*, was responsible for the collection of the revenue and the payment of the assigned quota into the Nawab's Treasury, and also for the maintenance of law and order, while his accounts were kept by the *kānungo* of the *pargana* and a staff of village accountants (*patwāris*).

Early British settlements.

In course of time some changes were made in the boundaries of *parganas* and there are now 35 *parganas* recognised. In the thirty years preceding the grant of the *dīwāni* to the East India Company not much change was made in the arrangement of *parganas*, but the assessment was enormously increased, and as the Mughal hold on the country weakened, the whole system became more and more disorganised, so that in 1772 when

the Directors decided to take the collections and the administration into their own hands, they had the greatest difficulty in obtaining correct information or accounts. They decided in the first place to farm out estates for five years to the highest bidders with the result that endless confusion was caused, and when fresh settlements were made in 1777 A.D. preference was given to the hereditary *zamīndārs*. The Regulations of the 10th February 1790 provided for a ten years' settlement of Bengal, but the application of this order to the districts of Tippera and Chittagong was postponed and yearly settlements continued to be made down till 1793, the year of the permanent settlement.

Mughal administration.

Of the early settlements on the mainland there is little record beyond what is to be found in published reports, but Mr. Duncan, to whose report reference has been made before, has left behind much valuable information as to Sandwīp. *Pargana* Sandwīp, which comprised the islands of Sandwīp, Hātia, Bāmni, and Shāgird-dihi, was in the year 1662, the *jāgir* of the Amir-ul-Omrah, and afterwards that of Nawāb Ibrahim Khān, and from the year 1713 that of Mir Jumla. When the management was first entrusted to an *ahdadār* does not appear; but there was one before the year 1753. The *pargana* was divided into three *tarafs* or shares known as the Niāmati, Musapur, and Rāmpur *tarafs*, the owners of which possessed some lands jointly and some separately. At first these divisions seem to have been unrecognised by the Mughal governors, and in 1716 when the islands were measured, the *āmin* divided the assessment in proportion to the land actually in possession of the co-sharers. The lands, both *maujūd* and *makhlūt* (original and added lands), were surveyed again in the years 1733 and 1743, and the proportions readjusted. The last measurement was made in 1763 when Bhawāni Charan was found in possession of 11 annas 4 *gandas* odd. In the meantime Bhawāni Charan had caused his name to be registered as *zamīndār* of an 11 annas 18 *gandas* 1 *kara* share, and the *kanungos*, to whom the point was referred, ruled that he could claim no abatement on the ground that he was actually in possession of less than his recorded share. They based the ruling on the ground that Sandwīp was a *tahudi mahāl*, that is, one the revenue of which was fixed, and not a *hasb-ul-wusuli mahāl*, a class of estate in which the proprietor was liable to pay his whole collections less the proportion allowed him.

Valuation

In the assessment of 1763 the lands were divided into full rated (*puradar*) and low rated (*kamdar*) lands. It was assumed that in every four *kānis* of first class cultivated land one produced 25 *kannuas** of grain, one 20, one 17½, and one 10, giving an average of 18⅛; one-fifth of this was deducted as the '*patta* privilege' of the *tālukdār*,† and half the residue or 7¼ *kannuas* (valued

---

* This measure is not defined.

† *Talukdar*, i.e., the holder of an intermediate tenure, *vide* page 79.

at 1¼ *kannuas* per rupee) was the measure of the rent to be paid by the *tālukdār* to the *zamīndār*. First class fallow lands were valued at five-eighths of the rate for cultivated land. Inferior cultivated lands and fallow lands were valued at half the rates for the best class.

bwabs. The assessment thus made constituted the *tashkisi jama*, but this was subsequently increased by several *abwābs*, *viz.*, *mathaut*, an allowance to the *Nāib ahdadār* levied at 2 annas 17 *gandas* per rupee on the *tashkis* rent, *māshki* levied at 1 anna 7 *gandas* per rupee, and *dihi kharcha* (local expenses) also collected at 1 anna 7 *gandas* per rupee. The rates of collection of these *abwābs* varied in the different divisions, and they were not always shown in the accounts.

The *tālukdārs* complained bitterly of these additions to their rental, which amounted in 1787 to 5 annas 11 *gandas* per rupee on the *tashkis* revenue of the 12 annas estate; the *zamīndārs* agreed to reduce them to 4 annas, and this arrangement was allowed to continue pending a fresh measurement and assessment.

The regulations for the permanent settlement required all *abwābs* to be amalgamated with the rent, but many of these separate payments continued to be exacted. Even now in most estates the following will be found:—*punya*, a present, usually one rupee, to the landlord on the first day of the *zamindāri* year; *piyāda*, a small fee to a peon deputed specially to summon the tenant; *mārchā*, a fine on marriage of the ryot's son or daughter; *amlā*, a present to the servants of the estate; *salāmi*, a fee to the landlord on special occasions. These miscellaneous payments are often included in agreements taken from tenants, so that they may be recoverable at law.

lassifica-on of lands. The classification of the lands of Sandwīp is not easy to follow, but apparently the system was as follows:—The first division was into *taraf*, *maujūd*, and *makhlūt*, lands; the *chaudhuris* being accountable for the revenue of the first division, while by the custom of Sandwīp the management of the other classes was in the hands of the *ahdadārs*.* The *taraf* lands seem to have been those separately possessed by different *chaudhuris*, the *maujūd* being the undivided assessed lands and the *makhlūt* additions to this area by reclamation and accretion. The lands (query *taraf* lands only) were again classified as *huzerea* (probably *huzuri*), *nij-tāluks*, and *khudkāsht*.† On the first class, which formed much the largest part and seems to have been let out in *tāluks*, the *zamīndārs* (*chaudhuris*) retained only the cess known as *māshki*, the *tālukdārs* paying the rest of their rent to the *ahdadār*. On the *nij-tāluks* they seem to have enjoyed the *tālukdār's* share (one-fifth of the produce), and on the *khudkāsht* they paid the nominal valuation but the *ahdadār* was expected

* Paras. 420, etc., of Mr. Duncan's report.

† Op cit., para. 443.

not to exact the full value of the produce or to enquire too closely into the profits. A similar arrangement appears to have prevailed in Bhulua which had been managed by *ahdadārs*. The correspondence of 1790 shows that the *makhlūt* lands of Bhuluā were undivided and were managed directly by Government; but the information obtainable is fragmentary.

Land revenue.

The following table compares the past and present land revenue of the principal *parganas*; the early figures being based on Grant's View of the Revenues of Bengal. :—

Name of pargana.	Land Revenue in 1728 A.D.			Land revenue in 1765.	Present land revenue.	Remarks.
	Khālisa.	Jāgir.	Total.			
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	
Bhulua ...	14,271	26,891	41,162	1,35,982	1,23,929	In the year 1790 the revenue was Rs. 1,06,487.
Jagdia ...	...	16,984	16,984	17,734	28,705	
Dāndra and Illahābād.	2,348	5,138	7,486	48,638	18,768	These were long under *khās* management.
Bābupur ...	350	...	350	12,984	14,952	
Gopālpur Mirzanagar.	3,106	...	3,106	15,889	21,060	
Ambarābād ...	289	...	289	...	81,633	The land was covered with forest when first granted.
Shaistānagar ...	993	...	993	...	14,848	Ditto.
Kanchanpur ...	2,090	...	2,090	...	6,365	
Sandwip ...	54,696	...	54,696	1,08,470	1,52,105	

It is necessary to explain that the lands of all estates were divided into (1) *Khālisa*, (2) *Jāgir*; the revenue from the former being payable into the imperial treasury, and that from the latter appropriated to local expenditure, the large proportion of jāgir in Bhulua and its vicinity being for the support of the force necessary to protect the frontier against the Maghs and Tipperas.

It is doubtful whether the revenue shown for the year 1765 was collected, and certainly the enhancement made in the

preceding 37 years got no further than the local officials. Fuller details regarding Sandwīp are to be had in Mr. Duncan's report, and may serve as an example of the course in other estates.

Revenue of Sandwip.

In the year 1662 the *māl* revenue, that is, the revenue from the land, was only Rs. 6,667. In 1713 nearly Rs. 4,000 were added in the guise of *lawāzimāt*. In 1728 a lump addition (*nazarāna*) of Rs. 4,000 was made, and other similar additions raised the *māl* revenue by 1751 A.D. to Rs. 22,793. In 1753 a new *ahdadār* was appointed, and payments to numerous officers and for police and other establishments increased the assessment by Rs. 14,000, but this seems to have been too much, for four years later another *ahdadār* was appointed and allowed a remission of Rs. 4,500. In 1763 Bishnu Charan Bose became *ahdadār* and gave an agreement to pay *dāsmāsha* rupees in place of the Arcot rupees that were the ordinary currency in the island, thus adding about 9 per cent. to his real payment. Large remissions were allowed in the next two years for inundation and *nājāy* (deficits) reducing the revenue at the time of the assumption of the Diwāni to Rs. 20,500. In 1772 the Committee of Revenue assessed the *pargana* at Rs. 77,974, of which Rs. 39,710 was subsequently determined to be the share of the *māl* revenue, and in 1777 the revenue was fixed at Rs. 50,584. The *jama wāsil bāki* enables us to compare this revenue with the actual receipts. In 1765 the gross rental was shown as Rs. 80,213, but of this Rs. 1,657 was postponed for the following year and the actual amount realised was Rs. 72,558, on which a *batta* or reduction for loss on light and base coins of Rs. 7,591 was allowed. The net realisations came to Rs. 65,000 Arcot rupees equivalent to about 59,000 *sikka*, so that the *zamindārs*, or rather the *ahdadārs*, retained in that year more than Rs. 38,000. In 1775 the collections from the land came to over Rs. 71,000 *sikka*, so that the enhanced revenue of the following year must have left the *zamindārs* with a substantial margin.

Sair revenue.

In the Mughal times *zamindārs* were allowed to levy tolls and landing dues, and enjoyed the profits of salt manufacture and markets The total of this *sair* revenue of Sandwīp was in 1662 A.D. Rs. 23,864. Small additions, chiefly as *nazar* to new governors, were made from time to time down to 1751, when Rs. 5,615 was added for the Mahratta *chaut*, Rs. 1,100 for *khāsnavisi*, and Rs. 26,250 as a premium of 14 annas per rupee on a fictitious annual advance of Rs. 30,000 from the governor, thus bringing the total to Rs. 60,717. In 1763 the demand stood at Rs. 72,056, but of this Rs. 18,400 were subsequently remitted on account of losses. The assessment made in 1772 did not distinguish *māl* from *sair* revenue in the first instance, but when the Company decided to resume all *sair* collections as a preliminary to the decennial settlement, the share of the total to be remitted on this account was fixed at Rs. 38,264, though the accounts of

the *pargana* do not show that a quarter of that sum was collected as *sair*.

Permanent settlement. In the permanent settlement all distinction of *khālisa* and *jāgir* was abolished and lands of every description were made liable for the land revenue, which was fixed so as to leave the proprietor a net income, including profits from private lands, of 10 per cent. of the collections, but this proportion could be exceeded in the case of petty properties or for special reasons. In Noākhāli a good many estates were for some time on the Collector's hands and the revenue was fixed practically by a compromise.

The land revenue of Noākhāli amounted in 1842-43 to Rs. 5,31,775; in 1908-09 it was Rs. 7,24,678. The large increase is to be attributed to the assessment of new alluvial formations. The incidence per acre of cropped land is a little under 12 annas.

Estates. All interests in land may be classified as either (1) estates, in which no interest intervenes between the proprietor and Government, (2) intermediate tenures, or (3) cultivators' holdings.

Estates are again sub-divided into revenue-paying and revenue-free, and the former of these classes into permanently settled, temporarily settled, and Government estates.

In 1908-09 there were 1,545 permanently settled estates with a land revenue of Rs. 4,51,658; 45 temporarily settled estates with a revenue of Rs. 52,859, and 245 Government estates with a demand of Rs. 2,12,947. Of these estates 128 represent whole and broken *parganas*. The policy of the decennial and permanent settlements required one *zamīndār* to be responsible for each estate, and every portion of a *pargana* in separate possession of one *zamīndār*, or a separate group of *zamīndārs*, became an estate; and after the permanent settlement provision was made for the partition of estates at the instance of any one of the proprietors.

Taluks. In the eighteenth century a great part of Noākhāli was in the hands of intermediate tenure-holders. They were recognised in the assessments made by the Mughal administrators and were allowed a fifth of the gross estimated rental.

The Regulations for the decennial settlement provided for the separation of certain classes of *tāluks* (Ar. ta'aluk=dependant) or tenures from the parent estate, *viz.*, those that had existed before the estate, had been created by a superior authority, or had been conceded the privilege by the deed of creation (*vide* Regulations of 23rd November 1791), and the *tālukdārs* were encouraged though not compelled to seek such separation. Those who asked for and were found entitled to separation were admitted to engage at a revenue calculated to leave them an income of a tenth of the gross assets including the profits from their *Nānkar* lands. Such *tāluks* are known as *khārija tāluks;* they are permanently settled and differ only in their origin from the

zamindāri estates. The number of estates so created in Noākhāli was returned as 2,181. There remained about 500 *tāluks* created before the permanent settlement which were not entitled to separation. They are called *petāo* (from the word *pet*=belly) and are the highest class of subordinate tenure. A *haulā* (Ar. *hawāla*=trust) is very similar to a *petāo tāluk* in its incidents, both being permanent, heritable, and divisible; but while there may be a *haulā* under a *tāluk* the order is never reversed. A *shikmi* tenure is similar in its incidents, but is subordinate to a *tāluk* or a *hāula*.

The term *hāula* appears to have been applied in the first instance to a commission granted to a man of energy and capital who undertook to bring newly formed land into cultivation, but in course of time it came into general use to designate a permanent hereditary tenure usually at fixed rates of rent. It is a term of great respectability, and many substantial cultivators call themselves *hāuladār* though they have no real title to the name. In early settlements it was customary to allow *hāuladārs* more favourable rates than were given to common cultivators, and they usually had the benefit of a deduction (*mutton*)* of from two and a half to ten per cent. from the measured area besides an allowance of $\frac{1}{32}$nd for the *ails* or ridges between the fields. This perhaps took the place of the different lengths of rod used in *zamindāri* estates for different classes of tenants. Many of these *tāluks* and *hāulas* are in fact *patni tāluks* subject to the provisions of Regulation VIII of 1819 and liable as such to be brought to sale by the Collector for default in payment of the rent, while the holders are bound to furnish security for their rent and good conduct, if so required. These permanent tenure-holders can devise similar rights to under-tenure-holders; thus under the patni may be found a *darpatni* and under that a *sepatni*. Below the *hāula* may be found a *nim hāula* or *osat hāula*, and below the *shikmi tāluk* a *darshikmi*.

Reclamation leases.

Jangalburi ābādkari tāluks are found in Sandwīp. They were granted at a progressive rent for the purpose of bringing waste lands under cultivation. The course of reclamation of *char* lands is usually as follows :—As soon as the new formation ceases to be overflowed by a normal tide, the landlord enters into a *gorkati* or grazing settlement with some contractor. When the grass and bush spring up roving herdsmen (Bāthaniā) come with their herds of cattle and bivouac on the *char* paying to the contractor a rent of so much a head for their cattle and a small fee for fuel. In course of time the land becomes fit for the plough, and formerly at this stage a *hāula* or *ābādkāri* lease would have been granted, but now a days it is usual to settle the land directly with ryots, who build temporary sheds and migrating there during the cultivating season with their plough and cattle begin to grow

---

* This was given also to *tālukdārs*. In early settlements it appears as a deduction from the area, in later ones as a deduction from the rate.

paddy. Later on as the land rises, they build permanent houses, dig arge tanks to procure a supply of fresh water, and plant round them betel, cocoanut and date-palms, plantains, *māndār* and other trees. They dig drains, throwing up the earth to form pathways among their scattered homesteads, and thus they settle with their families. The whole district has been formed and settled in this way from one end to the other. Formerly tenants for such newly formed land were in great demand and obtained very favourable terms. Mr. Walters reported that in 1819 new settlers on the *chars* of Hātia paid no rent for eight years and thereafter low rates for several years more; even now they begin with low rates, paying in the first year only six annas an acre for *degichar* or *malanghi char** or lands still submerged at high tide. The rent is usually progressive, and higher rates also on a progressive scale are fixed after the land becomes culturable.

Though certain portions of the lands are cultivated by tenure-holders and petty proprietors with the aid of hired labourers, the great bulk of the cultivation is in the hands of hereditary cultivators, whose rents were regulated formerly by custom and now by the provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act. At the time of the permanent settlement the ryots of Noākhāli rarely occupied the same land continuously for any length of time; they wandered from village to village, paying rent only for such lands as they actually cultivated. In Sandwīp, which had an earlier civilization, cultivation seems to have been less fluctuating. Mr. Duncan in his report of 1778 gives a translation of a typical ryoti lease, in which the lands are classified as ryoti, *kharsha*, and *barga*, and explains that the ryoti is that part of the tenure which the ryot is not at liberty to relinquish but must be answerable for the cultivation and revenue of it at the hazard of forfeiting his possession. The rent of the *kharsha* land was also payable in money but the tenant could relinquish the cultivation of it when he pleased. The *barga* was land for which a portion of the actual produce was deliverable as rent. *Ryots.*

Coming down to the nineteenth century we find a distinction drawn between *khudkāsht* or resident ryots, holding under *zamīndārs* or *tālukdārs*, and *jotdārs* cultivating under *hāuladārs*; more favourable terms being allowed to the former. The distinction is known no longer and the term *jotdār* means any cultivating tenant, ryot implying residence in the locality. In Chakla Bāmni (and probably elsewhere) a *jotdār* is a yearly tenant.

The relations of ryots with their landlords are now governed by the provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act, and most of them have rights of occupancy. These rights are not transferable without the consent of the landlord, but in practice are sold at from *Transfers.*

* *Malanghi*=a salt maker. Such lands were used formerly for making salt.

Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 per *kāni*,* or roughly at from £12 to £16 an acre, and in many estates the transfer is recognised on payment of a fee, usually 25 per cent. of the purchase money. The Bhulua *zamīndārs*, however, refuse to recognise such purchasers and make it a rule to evict them. According to the registration returns the occupancy rights in some 500 acres of land were sold in 1909 at an average price of about £9-10-0 an acre. Hardly any ryots nowadays pay produce rents.

Under-ryots. Under-ryots in Noākhāli have no occupancy rights, but it is recorded in the Settlement report of Chakla Bāmni that under-ryots' rights are sold, though *jotdāri* rights are not. Some of them pay produce rents and are regarded either as tenants or as labourers according to the circumstances of the case.

They are known as *osat-ryot*, and a further stage of subleasing is recognised in the *dar-osat-ryot*.

The distinction between tenure-holder, ryot, and under-ryot made by the Bengal Tenancy Act has given rise to difficulties in this district, where the holdings are often very large and the *jotdārs* arrogate to themselves the title of *hāuladār*. The Settlement Officer reports that in the settlements of Government *chars* made about 1876 the *hāuladārs* holding more than 100 *bighās* were treated as tenure-holders unless the whole area was in their own cultivating possession, and those holding less were classed as ryots unless the greater part was sublet—the under-tenants in either case being treated as *jotdārs* with occupancy rights. That a tenant can keep so much land in his own hands is due to the system of cultivation in the *chars*. The cultivators do not live there, but go for a short time in the spring and get the land ploughed and sown by hired labour—for which they pay very high—and then leave the rice plants alone until harvest time when they return with an army of hired reapers, cut, thresh, stack, and sell the paddy on the spot.

Revenue policy in 1821. On the formation of the district the Board of Revenue set out their views and their policy in a letter of 46 paragraphs, which even now will repay perusal. The Board advised Mr. Plowden not to institute resumption proceedings in petty cases, and to alleviate hardship by allowing progressive revenue. One part of their instructions is particularly interesting as showing how the severity of the regulations was softened down in practice. The assessment of *mālikāna* was to be made on the principle of estimating the gross produce at 15 per cent. above the farming *jama* if the lands were let in farm, or at the net rent if *khās*, a moiety of which was to constitute the demands of Government, leaving as *mālikāna* to the proprietor the difference between that moiety and the *jama* at which the farmer had engaged. They give as an example the case of a property of which the

* Based on the Collector's report.

former revenue was Rs. 800, the gross assets were assumed to be Rs. 920, of which Government took Rs. 460, leaving Rs. 340 as *mālikanā* to the recusant proprietor. They urged the Collector to take steps for the survey of his charge, and said that they expected that he would with indefatigable industry and research discover the material records of the office of the former Collectorate at Bhulua; but this last injunction does not seem to have been complied with.

Sub-infeudation.

Tenures are exceedingly numerous in Noākhāli and sub-infeudation prevails to a deplorable extent. Exact statistics are not to be had without much labour, but the number of tenures assessed to cess is 167,305, greater than in any district of Eastern Bengal except Bākarganj and 2½ times as many as in the adjoining district of Tippera. Mr. Cumming's account of sub-infeudation in Chakla Roshnābād * may be taken as applicable to the district as a whole. He writes :—"In the area held by tenure-holders it may be generally asserted that the prevailing feature is not sub-infeudation, but sub-division. There is sub-infeudation, but not to the extent which exists in the neighbouring district of Bāckergunge or in the Sadar part of Noākhāli. One instance found was as follows :—proprietor, then a taluk, then a dar-taluk, then a patni, then a dar-patni and then the raiyat. Herein are four intermediaries between the cultivator and the Raj. The process of sub-division is the result partly of inheritance, especially amongst Muhammadans, and of transfers; but the sub-division is principally due to the system under which tenures were created without definite areas in a country in which and at a time when spontaneous increase of cultivated area was both possible and permissible. The result is an intermixture of tenures similar to that existing amongst the estates in Muzaffarpur and Chittagong. Anomalies of course are discovered when the record of rights is prepared. Several taluks are found to be holding some lands jointly, but the holders cannot say what the proportionate share of each taluk is. This is the chrysalis stage. Again, certain land is recorded as held jointly (ijmali) under several taluks and the shares are settled; but the holders of the taluks are receiving rents from the tenants out of proportion to the nominal shares. This is a further development, in which the weaker go to the wall. The last stage is when the area originally held jointly has been parcelled out by mutual arrangement, so that each taluk has the entire possession of the lands allotted to it (chinnit dakhal). The more inchoate the stage of growth of the tenure, the greater is the difficulty of record." The Sub-divisional Officer of Feni reports that in *pārgana* Amirābād alone there are 300 taluks, and in Bedarābād 800, and that the sub-infeudation and the intermixture of joint and several tenure is most complex. One peculiarity in the tenures of these *parganas* is that the owner of half the estate

* Paragraph 63, Report on the Settlement of Chakla Roshnabād.

let out his share in *tāluki* lease in 1866, while the same *tālukdārs* took fresh settlements three years later from the sixteen annas' proprietors preserving intact the former agreements. The forms of intermediate tenures are numerous. Under the landlords we find *pātni tāluks*, *kāimi tāluks*, *kāimi hāulās*, occupancy holdings and non-occupancy holdings; under the *pātni* tenures there are *dar-pātnis* and *se-pātnis* and beneath any one of these there may be in succession *tapas*, *shikmi tapas*, and *dar-shikmi tapas*, *kāimi jots* (ryots at fixed rates), and ordinary ryoti holdings. Beneath the *kāimi tāluk* come *dar-tāluks*, *shikmi tāluks* and *dar-shikmi tāluks*, and beneath any of these there may be *tapas*, *hāulas*, ryots at fixed rates, etc. Beneath the *hāulā* there may be a *nim hāulā*, and under that a *tapa*, and so on.

Government Estates.

After the Permanent Settlement Government acquired by purchase portions of estates sold to liquidate arrears of revenue, many new islands became its property under the law of alluvion, some invalid grants in Government estates were resumed, and a few properties escheated to Government. Most of these were farmed or let for short terms on *ābādkāri tālukdāri* tenures, the lessee undertaking to bring a certain area into cultivation during the term, and receiving 15 per cent. or more on the total collections. In 1861 the Board's decision to allow only annual leases provoked a protest from the Collector; but about the same time attempts were made to sell the Government estates, though the undeveloped condition of many made it hopeless to expect a full price. Ultimately 68 estates with an area of 80,443 acres have been sold for Rs. 4,12,512, subject to an annual revenue of Rs. 1,27,583. Others have been settled for varying periods, generally with neighbouring proprietors; and there remained in 1909 A.D. 245 estates with a gross revenue of Rs. 2,12,947 in the possession of Government. Of these 34 with a revenue of Rs. 58,638 are in *pargana* Sandwīp, seven with a revenue of Rs. 10,002 in Bhulua, and 68 with a revenue of Rs. 1,40,804 are in the islands of the Meghnā, *pargana* Zāzirah.* There are three administrative divisions in charge of a Deputy Collector at headquarters and of Sub-Deputy Collectors on Sandwīp and Hātiā, and ten tahsīl circles. The cost of management comes to 9 per cent. of the revenue demand, and the total outgoings on management and improvements are about Rs. 24,000 a year. In 1907-08 the number of certificates filed for the recovery of arrears of rent was 1,957, and only Rs. 7,587 were remitted. In the ten years ending in 1904-05 more than the total demand for the period was collected, but there have been large enhancements since then. For the years 1896—1901 the average demand was Rs. 1,12,000 a year and for the next five years Rs. 1,45,000 a year. The increase is due to the formation of new and improvement of older *chars*, which necessitate constant settlement and re-settlement.

---

* Zāzirah means alluvial formation.

Temporarily settled estates.

There are 45 temporarily settled estates, paying a revenue of Rs. 52,859. They are scattered all over the district, but 14 with a revenue of Rs. 23,617 are in *pargana* Zāzirah.

Fishery estates.

The right of fishing in the tidal rivers belongs to the public and no charge is made for it. There are only two petty *jalkar mahāls*, one in the Dākātiā *Dona*, and the other in the Rahmat Ali *khāl*.

Revenue-free estates.

The Mughal Emperors from time to time granted lands free of revenue to holy men or to those who had done them service, and subordinate officials and even *zamīndārs* had made many such grants of the lands in their charge. In 1782 the 'Bāze Zāmin Daftār' was constituted to obtain a record of these grants, and Regulation XIX of 1793 defined the classes of grants that were to be recognised. All grants made before the year 1765 and in possession of the grantee were declared valid. Grants made between 1765 and 1790 were valid only if they had been made or confirmed by the Government, and grants of later date were declared null and void, whatever the length of possession. Government, however, claimed only the revenue to be derived from the resumption of grants of more than a hundred *bighās*, leaving the *zamīndārs* to apply for the resumption of smaller grants within their estates and to enjoy the profits. It was long before the investigation was completed, and ultimately 74 major grants were confirmed and became revenue-free estates, while the cess returns show 915 rent-free tenures within the ambits of estates.

The only revenue-free tenures in Noākhāli that call for special notice are the *khusbāsh lākhirāj* grants. This name was applied to the lands, originally 40 *drons*, occupied free of rent by the descendants of the garrison of 1,400 men sent to Bhulua in the seventeenth century to protect it from the incursions of the Maghs. In 1830 the tenures were resumed under the orders of the Board of Revenue, but in 1843 the persons in possession of 36 parcels of these lands were allowed to purchase the proprietary right free of revenue on payment of ten years' revenue.

Sale of estates.

Following the practice of their predecessors the East India Company used at first to recover arrears of revenue from proprietors or farmers by confining the defaulter and sending officers (*sazāwal*) to collect the rents directly. The sale of the property itself was introduced by the regulations for the decennial settlement which allowed the Board of Revenue with the sanction of the Governor-General to sell a portion of the estate in default sufficient for the liquidation of the balance due. Regulation III of 1794 exempted landholders from imprisonment for failure to pay the land revenue, but this exemption was withdrawn by Regulation VII of 1799, and down to 1841 imprisonment of the landholder and sale of the whole or a portion of his property continued to be alternative or supplementary methods of realising

arrears. The present law, Bengal Act XI of 1859, makes sale the only coercive measure and the whole property is liable to be sold for the most petty arrear unless any shares are protected by special registration, in which case they are to be sold only if the price fetched by the residue is less than the balance due. The number of such separate accounts registered was 851 in 1907-08.

It would be unprofitable to follow the long course of attachments and sales, but the result of them is that not a single *zamīndāri* estate remains in possession of the proprietors who held it when the district first came under British administration. It would not be fair to blame only the inelastic system for this : the records disclose a chronic state of quarrel and dispute among the *zamīndārs* that must of itself have proved the ruin of any estate.

Nowadays sales are infrequent; in 1901-05 though 337 estates and shares of estates became liable to sale only 24 were sold; and in the same period 85 tenures in Government estates were sold for arrears of rent. Revenue-paying estates fetch from 15 to 20 times the net profit.

Public demands recovery.

Arrears of public demands are recovered by means of certificates made under Bengal Act I of 1895 which have the force of a decree and are executed by attachment and sale of the defaulter's property.

In the ten years ending 1904-05 the average annual number of such certificates was just over 1,900 and in 1907-08 there were 3,122.

Land registration.

In 1907-08 there were 8,965 separate interests in estates recorded under Bengal Act VII of 1876. In the five years ending in 1905 the annual number of applications under the Act was nearly 600, and in 1907-08, 640 new interests were entered in the registers.

Kists.

The *kists* or instalments of rents vary in different estates. In Bhulua, Ambarābād, and some other estates the permanent tenures usually pay in ten instalments spread over the months of Baisākh to Māgh. Ryots usually pay in four instalments: in Bhulua, Ambarābād, and the 6 anna estate of Bābupur *pargana* these fall due in Ásārh, Áswin, Pous, and Chaitra. The Sub-divisional Officer of Feni reports that tenure-holders and ryots of the Courjon estates have to pay rent in 10 *kists*, and that at the end of the first month interest at one anna per rupee is due, at the end of the second *kist* two annas per rupee, and so on, until at the 10th *kist* a tenant in arrears has to pay double the original rent.*

Zamindars.

In the years that followed the Permanent Settlement all the big estates came to sale, and not one is now in possession of heirs of the original proprietors.

* This information was received too late for verification and coming from a reliable source has been entered; but I have never known such an arrangement.

The Administrator-General on behalf of Arun Chandra Singh and Satyendranāth Ghose of the Paikpārā family holds the great Bhulua estate, the six annas estate of Bābupur, nearly the whole of *pargana* Amirābād, and considerable properties in Sandwīp and the islands. The major portion of the old formations of Sandwīp, Hātiā, and Bāmni is shared by Mr. Delauney, Mrs. Massingham, and Shib Dulāl Tewāri—all foreigners. The largest estate in Omarābād belongs to Gobinda Chandra Singh and others of Murshidābād; Tappa Jaynagar belongs to a *zamīndār* of Muktagāchā. *Parganas* Bedarābād, Amirābād,* and Kādvā, formerly the property of the Rājā of Hill Tippera, were granted by him to Mr. Courjon and have passed into the possession of the heirs of Mahārājā Durga Charan Law. His Highness the Rājā of Hill Tippera owns 129½ square miles of Chakla Roshnābād and a fourth of *pargana* Dāndrā. In fine, except the Dālāl Bāzār *zamīndārs*, who are descended from the Banyan of Mr. Verelst, all the principal landowners are absentees.

* There are two Amirābāds.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

Staff. Noākhāli is a regulation district, that is to say, one in which the Bengal Regulations and all Acts applying to Bengal are in force unless expressly excluded. The head of the district is the Magistrate and Collector, who combines in one person magisterial, revenue and executive functions; as District Registrar he is the head of the local Registration Department, and as Chairman of the District Board has a general control over the communications, sanitation and primary education of the district. His superior staff for general administration consists of four Assistant or Deputy Magistrates, having also revenue powers, and a Sub-Deputy Collector, besides the staffs at Feni, Sandwīp and Hātia.

Sub-division. Until the year 1876 the district was an undivided charge, but in that year *thānā* Chhāgalnāiya from Tippera and Mirkasarai from Chittagong were combined with *thānā* Feni to form the Feni sub-division; two years later Mirkasarai was retransferred to Chittagong. The sub-division is in charge of a Deputy Magistrate and Collector, who is immediately responsible for the administration of his charge, and though divorced from direct control of the specialised departments, such as Registration and Excise, is yet as the local representative of the district officer expected to keep an eye on them and bring to notice any defect.

Thanas. The *thānā* was originally the seat of a *Faujdār*, but in its modern application means a police circle. These police circles were constituted originally under the provisions of the Regulations of 1793 and were supposed to have an area of 400 square miles. When the district was first formed there were included in it eight *thānās*, *viz.*, Sudharām, Begamganj, Lakhipur, Rāmganj, Amirgāon, Chāndia, Sandwīp, and Hātia, and since then there have been few changes.

The Dhanya Munya outpost of Chāndia was promoted later to be a *thānā*, and these two *thānās* were transferred to Bākarganj in 1869, while Chhāgalnāiya was added to Noākhāli in 1876.

Thānā Amirgāon was in the year 1875 removed to Farādnagar and was renamed Feni. A new *thānā* called Bāmni was opened in the south-east of the district, but in 1888 its name was changed to Companyganj, and it has been reduced to the status of an outpost under *thānā* Sudharām, so that at present there are eight *thānās* and one independent outpost in the district. Constituted purely for police purposes, the *thānā* has almost entirely superseded the *pargana* as a unit of revenue and general administration.

Villages.

The village never existed as an integral unit of administration in this part of Bengal. The cultivators in early days were nomadic and had no village organisation such as is found in western India; consequently the survey officers found it difficult to define the village, and though the *mauza*, as the villages of the revenue survey are termed, is the unit for revenue purposes, it was found so inconvenient that it was not followed in the census of 1901, for which the whole district was divided into one town and 2,633 villages. At present the groups of villages, known as *chaukidāri* unions, have to a great extent taken the place of the village as a unit.

Village servants.

There were very few village servants in the district. A certain number of *patwāris* or accountants did exist, but they were really the servants of the *zamīndārs* and tenure-holders, and at the present day though many people bear the title of *patwāri*, it is rather an honorary distinction, implying some degree of education, than an indication of an office.

Thirty years ago the village headmen, known as *mātabars* or *mahalladārs*, still enjoyed considerable dignity and power, but they have been almost entirely displaced by the *chaukidāri panchayets* described below.

Police.

The *chaudhuris* and other *zamīndārs* were under the Mughal administration responsible for the maintenance of peace and apprehension of offenders, but so far from doing their duty in this respect they seem to have been the chief supporters of dacoits. With the introduction of the farming system and the establishment of *faujdārs* they were relieved of this duty, but in 1782 a proclamation was issued by the Governor-General, ordering all *zamīndārs* "to erect *thānās*" in their respective jurisdictions. They were made liable to refund the value of any property stolen if they failed to recover it, and were warned that the penalty for complicity in robbery, murder or breach of the peace was death.

The Regulations of the 7th December 1792 relieved them of their responsibilities. *Thānās* were then formed and placed in charge of *darogas* who had under them a few *barkandāzes* (thunderbolt throwers or musqueteers) and were paid from the proceeds of a tax levied on traders and shop-keepers, and encouraged to energy by rewards for the apprehension of offenders. This system continued with few modifications until the passing of Act V of 1861 by which the organisation of the police is now regulated.

It was better than nothing, but in 1818 we find Mr. Walters pointing out the defects of the system, defects that survive in part to this day. The *barkandāzes* were underpaid and inefficient, the charges were too big, the police had such a bad name that respectable men would not serve as *darogas*, and several of these officers were found guilty of complicity in serious crime. The petty exactions of the police and the delays and expenses of justice deterred the people from reporting the

commission of offences; and above all he considered a river police absolutely essential to grapple with thefts and dacoity by gangs (*kāfila*) of professional thieves.

In 1860 the police force of Noākhāli consisted of 164 men and 37 officers. In 1908 there were a Superintendent, 3 Inspectors, 24 Sub-Inspectors, 36 head-constables, and 242 constables; or one policeman to every 3,707 inhabitants and every 5·3 square miles.

Of these a force of 25 men and 2 head-constables under a Sub-Inspector are kept and drilled at head-quarters as an armed reserve. For a long time this duty was performed by a company of the Chittagong Militia. Shortly before the Mutiny this company was disbanded; but in 1858 the Magistrate had enrolled a number of the old sepoys and others to form a guard 170 strong. The men were well paid getting Rs. 6 each, high wages in those days, but the correspondence does not show what became of them.

Village police.

That the Magistrates and police so entirely failed to maintain law and order in the early days of British administration may be ascribed in no small measure to the absence of a village watch or of any substitute for it. Mr. D. J. MacNeile, who made an enquiry into the village police of Bengal in 1866, failed to ascertain how or by whom the *chaukidārs* whom he found there were first appointed, but he was satisfied that there were none when Bhulua was separated from Tippera in 1821. It may be noted that in Sandwīp, and apparently near Noākhāli also, there were then living large numbers of ex-soldiers or descendants of ex-soldiers of the Mughal armies pensioned off with grants of land, but Mr. Walters found no *chaukīdārs* in 1819 and was so strongly impressed with the need of some such officers that he appointed *barkandāzes* at the principal *ghāts* as a provisional measure.

In 1840 the Collector reported that there were 1,760 village watchmen, who were appointed by the village headmen (*mātabars* or *mahalladārs*) and paid by collections from the villagers.

In 1876 the Bengal Chaukidāri Act was applied to the district, and the force organised as at present. Under this Act the villages are grouped together into "Unions," or *chaukidāri* villages, to each of which a managing committee of five persons, or *panchayet*, is appointed. The Magistrate fixes the number and pay of the *chaukidārs*, and the extent of each beat. The *panchayet* assess the villagers in proportion to their means, raising enough to meet the pay of the *chaukidārs*, and leave a small margin for contingencies. They have powers of distraint and are personally liable for the *chaukidārs'* pay if it falls into arrears. The tendency has been for the collecting member of the *panchayet* to get the whole power into his hands, and these collecting members have usurped almost all the dignity and functions of the former *mahalladārs* or village headmen. Of late years *dafadārs*

or literate watchmen have been appointed to assist the *panchayet* and serve as a connecting link between them and the police. They are also responsible for looking up bad characters at night. In 1908 there were 198 unions with 198 *dafadārs* and 1,894 *chaukidars*, about 110 houses to each *chaukidār* according to the census. The *chaukidārs* get Rs. 5 a month, and the *dafadārs* Rs. 6, and their cost, including the 15 per cent. allowed for contingencies and the remuneration of the collecting *panchayet*, comes to Rs. 1,50,000. Most of the *chaukidārs* are recruited from the local Muhammadans.

Thirty-five *chaukidārs* were dismissed and 547 fined in 1908, and 134 got small rewards averaging Rs. 4. Under a system inaugurated in 1904 small additions to the monthly pay are provided from the *chaukidāri* reward fund for meritorious conduct; as more permanent marks of distinction brass chevrons are given.

Registration.

Under the Mughal rulers the local *kāzis* used to register deeds, but their registration was not always satisfactory, as will be seen from the following extract from Mr. Duncan's Report on Sandwīp.

The system of registration is described in the following terms :—

"There are two cazies or men who act under that quality in Sandwip, one for the 12 and another for the 4 anna division, receiving no allowance from Government and subsisting only by certain contingent fees and dues which they receive on attesting writings or performing other acts incident to their office in respect to marriages, etc. They are thence entirely dependent on the zemindar in whose part of the parganah they respectively reside, because his countenance and allowance is necessary to secure to them the regular receipt of their fees on sundry occasions."

By Regulation XXXVI of 1793 a registry of wills and deeds was established. The system was amended and amplified by various Acts, and finally by Act (III of 1877), which is (still) * in force. Under this Act 22 registration offices have been established in the district, and the number of deeds registered in 1908 was 73,716 of an aggregate value of Rs. 67,28,400. The deeds registered include over 15,000 deeds of sale or exchange, 23,000 mortgages, and 20,000 leases of which 5,200 were perpetual leases.

The Collector is also District Registrar and as such controls registration in the district subject to the direction of the Inspector-General. He is aided by a special Sub-Registrar who is in charge of registration at head-quarters, and also inspects rural offices. Since 1905 the Sub-Registrars have all been salaried and form a self-contained graded service; and the clerks and muharrirs on their establishment are now paid by Government. The receipts from registration in 1908 were Rs. 71,816 and the expenditure Rs. 52,458. The most important offices are Noākhāli, where a Joint Sub-Registrar is entertained to relieve the pressure, Lakhipur, Begamganj and Sandwīp.

* XVI of 1908 now.

Registration of Muhammadan marriages.

It appears that the Muhammadan Government levied a fee, known as *haldāri*, varying from Rs. 3 to Rs. 4-4 on all marriages, and in the case of a Muhammadan the ceremony had to be performed before the *kāzi* and *mufti*, who exacted further fees, and the expense of marriage under these conditions had proved a very serious encouragement to celibacy. The Regulations of 1772 abolished all these fees and prohibited *kāzis* from exacting any payment for officiating at a marriage except such as was offered voluntarily. Accordingly, though the appointments of *kāzis* in towns and *parganas* continued to be made by Government, these officers lost their position in the eyes of the people, and it became customary for marriages to be celebrated in the presence of any respectable Muhammadan, who chose to call himself *kāzi*. In 1864 the appointment of *kāzis* was discontinued, but the need of some system of registry of Muhammadan marriages became more and more apparent; the well-to-do indeed often executed marriage deeds, which were registered in the offices of the Registrars of Assurances, but the bulk of the people took no such precaution, and the courts found the greatest difficulty in dealing with questions of disputed marriage or legitimacy.

Bengal Act I of 1876 passed to remedy this evil provides for the appointment of Registrars of Muhammadan marriages, and Act XII of 1880 provides for the appointment of *kāzis*, though it imposes no obligation to have marriages performed by them. The Registrar is entitled to a fee of Re. 1 for registration, and to receive any gratuity that may be offered him. A *kāzi's* fees for officiating at any ceremony are regulated purely by agreement.

In 1907-08 there were 16 Registrars of Muhammadan marriages in Noākhāli, who registered upwards of 4,000 marriages and 1,000 divorces. All these Registrars have also been appointed to be *kāzis*, but there is no record of the number of ceremonies at which they have officiated in that capacity. The number of marriages registered is a very small fraction of the total, but in proportion to its size the system seems to have taken a greater hold on Noākhāli than on any other district.

Criminal justice.

The head of the judicial administration of the district is the District and Sessions Judge. As Sessions Judge he tries with the help of assessors all serious cases and hears appeals from all the first class Magistrates in the district. The District Magistrate tries but a few cases himself, but supervises the work of the other Magistrates, and hears appeals from those exercising second and third class powers.

In 1908 there were 9 subordinate stipendiary magistrates in the district besides a bench of Honorary Magistrates at Noākhāli and one Honorary Magistrate sitting singly.

Crime.

The crime in the district is comparatively light. As long ago as 1842 the Superintendent of Police (an Officer who

corresponded to the present Inspector-General) commented on the absence of serious crime and expressed the opinion that there must be a good deal which was not reported, but his inference apparently was not justified, and Noākhāli has continued to maintain an enviable reputation for peacefulness among the districts of Eastern Bengal. For the five years 1900—04 the average number of cases cognisable and non-cognisable reported was 4,880, rather less than in the preceding quinquennium. In 1908, 5,590 cases came before the courts, but of these only 3,130 were accepted as true, and only 966 persons were convicted. The true cases included 15 riots, 10 murders or homicides, 16 cases of grievous hurt, 38 of serious mischief, chiefly cattle poisoning, 223 house-breaking, and 159 thefts. Cattle poisoning, arson, and the making or passing of false coin are peculiarly rife in this district. They are all difficult to detect, and the reported figures probably do not show the extent to which they prevail.

Civil justice.

For the administration of civil justice the District Judge is assisted by a staff of one subordinate judge and 10 munsiffs. In 1908 the total number of original suits instituted was 23,118, of which 7,830 were money suits, 12,631 rent suits and 2,657 title suits. Civil litigation is not increasing much, the largest number of suits in any year since 1893 having been in 1899. The average value of the subject-matter of the suits for each of the three years ending with 1908 was Rs. 15,06,000.

Jail.

There is a small jail at Noākhāli for the accommodation of 95 prisoners, though it is capable at a pinch of holding a good many more, and the average daily population in 1908 was 177 persons of all classes. It is a very healthy jail, and in spite of the overcrowding in 1908, the average proportion of sick in hospital was less than 1 in 30, and only one death occurred. The prisoners cost in that year Rs. 97-9-0 each to maintain, and the profits of their labour were estimated only at Rs. 15-8-0 per head.

Finance.

The total revenue raised in the district in 1824 was Rs. 5,18,000, and in 1850-51 it had risen to Rs. 11,54,000, of which Rs. 3,62,000 was derived from the manufacture of salt. Owing partly to the abandonment of this manufacture and partly to poor collections it had dropped in 1870-71 to Rs. 8,84,000. Since then the Income Tax and the Road and Public Works Cess have been imposed; Land Revenue has grown, owing chiefly to the assessment of new alluvial formations in the estuary; Stamps and Registration yield an ever increasing revenue; and in 1908 the receipts under the principal heads, including the moiety of the Road and Public Works Cess credited to Government, was Rs. 14,70,000. This does not include the village assessment for the *chaukidārs*, nor the rates and taxes credited to local bodies, which would bring the total up to over Rs. 18,00,000.

Income tax.

In 1902-03 the income tax yielded Rs. 23,000 paid by 1,136 assessees. From that year the lowest limit of assessable income

was raised from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000 a year, but this measure while affording relief to a number of clerks and petty shokeepers, hardly affected the collections, which in 1908-9 amounted to Rs. 24,000 assessed on 600 persons.

Excise. The people of Noākhāli, both Hindus and Muhammadans, are extremely temperate, and the excise revenue is far less than in any other plains district in the province. In 1908-09 it was only Rs. 24,772 against Rs. 17,691 in 1892-93. The increase is due almost entirely to the greater consumption of opium and hemp drugs.

There is but little consumption of spirits, which are distilled from molasses on the outstill system, and bring in about Rs. 6,000 a year.

The consumption of opium has doubled in the last 18 years, and in 1908-09 the duty and license fees on it amounted together to Rs. 7,183. Ganja is the most popular drug, and yields a revenue of about Rs. 10,600 a year.

Stamps. The people of the district are highly litigious, ready to take the smallest dispute into court, and so distrustful of each other that the pettiest transactions are recorded in stamped agreements. Accordingly the revenue from stamps, both judicial and non-judicial, is expanding rapidly and amounted in 1908-09 to Rs. 5,40,398, of which Rs. 4,13,728 was derived from the sale of judicial stamps.

Cesses. Bengal Act IX of 1880 empowered the Collector [to levy a road cess and a public works cess on the annual value of all immovable property in the district at a rate, not exceeding half an anna in the rupee for either cess, to be determined by the Road Cess Committee (now the District Board); the proceeds of the road cess to be paid to that Committee and that of the public works cess to be devoted to provincial public works and to subsidies to the district road fund.

These cesses are now levied at the maximum rate. The total demand in 1907-08 was Rs. 2,15,397 as against Rs. 1,37,278 in 1892-93. The rental of Noākhāli has increased enormously in the last thirty years, and large additions to the cess are obtained at every revaluation.

Arms Act. The Indian Arms Act, 1878, is in force, and under its provisions licenses for 703 fire-arms, of which 17 were breech-loaders, were in force at the end of 1908. Nearly a fourth of the licenses were given for protection against wild animals, but none of the larger carnivora were shot in the district during the year, and only one man and four head of cattle were killed by tigers and leopards. No persons residing in the district were exempted from the provisions of the Act either as great *zamīndārs* or as a special personal distinction.

Postal and Telegraph Statistics. In Noākhāli there are one head post office, 12 sub-offices, and 47 branch offices, and the number of letters received in 1909 was

over 2,040,000. There has been a great expansion of post office work of late years. In 1861-62 the total number of letters and parcels received was under 39,000, and as late as 1899-1900 there were only 35 post offices in all. The value of the money-orders issued has risen from Rs. 12,04,000 in 1899-1900 to Rs. 17,16,000 in 1908-09, and that of money-orders received from Rs. 7,20,000 to Rs. 14,81,000 in the same years.

There are only two telegraph offices besides those at the railway stations.

Surveys.

Periodical measurements were made during the Mughal period and large portions of the district were surveyed and settled in the early days of British rule. Sandwīp and the connected islands were surveyed by a Mr. Rawlins in 1787 and in 1833 by Captain Hodges. The lands of *pargana* Bhulua were measured about the year 1790 by Mr. Dandridge and many other estates were at one time or another in the *khās* possession of Government and measured by its officers. But these early surveys were made with only a pole, usually ten cubits in length, carried by two men, and were necessarily inaccurate. The results were not embodied in any map, and in course of time most of the old papers were lost or worm-eaten. The revenue survey made by a professional party in the years 1864-65 shows the boundaries of villages and estates and the main topographical features of the country, and as regards the lands along the Meghnā, the results were corrected in the Diara Survey of the year 1881-82. In 1893-95, 129½ square miles of the Chāklā Roshnābād estate lying in Noākhāli were surveyed and settled and field-to-field maps and detailed lists of tenancies prepared. Similar cadastral surveys were made also for some 255 square miles, chiefly Government estates, during the years 1895—1905 and for another 158 square miles since then.

CHAPTER XII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

History.

The first experiment in Local Self-Government was the appointment in 1855 of a small committee to help the Magistrate in administering the Ferry Fund. Sir Frederick Halliday held that this gave no real assistance and only detracted from the Magistrate's responsibility* so the committee was abolished in 1857. Again in 1871 a Road Committee was established and was superseded from the 1st January 1875 by a Road Cess Committee which administered the proceeds of a cess levied at six pies in the rupee on the rental of the district.

Municipalities.

The only Municipality in the district is that of Sudharām, the head-quarters station. This was constituted in July 1876, and has 12 Municipal Commissioners, of whom one holds office ex-officio, and three are nominated by the Local Government. In 1907-8 the total income, including the contribution from Government of Rs. 500, was only Rs. 12,049, of which Rs. 5,199 were raised by taxes on the houses and lands at the rate of 7½ per cent. on their annual value, Rs. 4,800 by conservancy rates, and the balance was made up of taxes on animals, vehicles, profession, and trades, and of profits on pounds, rents, and miscellaneous items. The expenditure for the same year was Rs. 12,498, of which about 11 per cent. was on administration, and more than half on conservancy. To lighting and roads the Municipality devoted a tenth of its expenditure. It contributed Rs. 646 to hospitals, and Rs. 228 to education. The Commissioners take an interest in their work, and considering the small amount of money at their disposal, the Municipality is well run.

District Board.

The District Board of Noākhāli has 13 members, of whom four including the Chairman hold office ex-officio, three are nominated, and the rest elected by the Local Boards. The Board meet rather oftener than once a month, and the members are said to take a proper interest in their duties. Nearly all questions are considered in the first place by Standing Committees, on whom the bulk of the work falls.

Income.

In 1908-9 the opening balance of the Board was nearly Rs. 84,000, and its receipts during the year were over Rs. 2,57,000. This is a very substantial increase, for its average income for the ten years ending in 1901-02 was only Rs. 1,46,000. The increase is due in part to the larger collections of road cess, but chiefly to the much larger contributions received from provincial revenues. The contributions from provincial revenues amounted in

* Minute of the 8th April 1857.

1908-09 to Rs. 75,000 of which about Rs. 50,000 were for expenditure on education, Rs. 22,000 for the improvement of communications, Rs. 1,000 for the improvement of water-supply, and Rs. 2,000 for special works.

Expenditure

The total expenditure in 1908-09 amounted to Rs. 2,40,000, out of which administration cost a little over Rs. 6,000. On education the Board spent Rs. 82,500, or 39 per cent. of its income; on communications it spent Rs. 79,000, of which about Rs. 46,000 were on original works, chiefly bridges, while it maintained five miles of metalled roads at an average cost of Rs. 280 per mile, and 390 miles of unmetalled road at an average cost of Rs. 166 per mile; this excludes 281 miles of village roads in charge of the Local Boards, on which only Rs. 48 per mile was expended.

There are 98 cattle pounds in the district under the charge of the Board. They are farmed out and yield a net profit of nearly Rs. 5,000 a year.

The ferries of the district are also in charge of the Board, and by an arrangement with the District Board of Chittagong half the profits of the Komira ferry are credited to Chittagong, and in return a half share of the sale proceeds of the Bāgkhālī, Sandwīp, and Lālganj ferries in Chittagong is paid to Noākhāli. The Board spent Rs. 19,600 on medical relief mostly in contributions to the dispensaries, which are managed by independent committees under its general control, and partly also in the direct relief of cholera by the deputation to the interior of medical officers to deal with outbreaks.

Local Boards.

There are only two Local Boards in the district, the *Sadr* and the Feni Boards, the former having 11 and the latter 9 members, all of whom are nominated, except the Chairman, who holds office ex-officio. These Boards have very restricted powers and little to do beyond maintaining the village roads and tanks.

Unions.

There are also four Union Committees at Feni, Lakhipur, Sandwīp and Hātia, each consisting of six members appointed by the Commissioner of the Division. They are entrusted with the maintenance of the village roads, the water-supply and the drainage, and are allowed to enjoy the income derived from the local funds, and may raise money by contributions or a local assessment. In 1908-09 their total income amounted to Rs. 2,640, of which Rs. 1,829 was contributed by the District Board. It is said that they worked fairly well, but in the previous year the Hātia Committee failed to take a proper interest in its duties, and had to be reconstituted.

CHAPTER XIII.

EDUCATION.

History. In the year 1870-71 there were 26 Government and aided schools, in 9 of which English was taught, and the number of pupils was under 600. Sir George Campbell's educational reforms gave a great stimulus to the opening of schools, and in the year 1874-75 there were 187 Government and aided schools attended by upwards of 6,000 boys. In 1895-96 the number of schools attained its maximum of 2,775, and the returns of attendance showed nearly 58,000 pupils. At this time a change in the policy led to the disappearance of a good many bogus *pāthshālās* and in 1897-98 the number of schools was only 1,330 with less than 34,000 pupils. In 1908-09 the number of schools had risen to 1,518 with over 62,500 pupils on the rolls. Of these schools, 61 were secondary, 1,257 primary, 20 were special schools, and 180, of which 44 were advanced and the rest elementary, did not comply with any recognised standard.

Expenditure. The expenditure on public instruction has risen steadily. In 1901-02 it was Rs. 1,12,000. In 1908-09 it was over Rs. 2,47,000. Of this sum Rs. 49,000 was contributed from provincial revenues, Rs. 77,000 from local funds, Rs. 1,00,000 from fees, and the balance from private sources. Classified otherwise, Rs. 64,000 were spent on secondary schools, Rs. 94,000 on primary schools, Rs. 8,000 on special schools, Rs. 59,000 on buildings and furniture, Rs. 17,000 on inspection, Rs. 2,500 on scholarships, and the balance chiefly on hostel charges.

Secondary education. There are five High English Schools, of which one is maintained and three aided by Government, containing altogether over 1,300 pupils. There are also 55 English and Vernacular Middle Schools with some 5,700 pupils; of these 4 are managed by local authorities, and all the rest, except six, are aided.*

The cost of education comes to nearly Rs. 20 per pupil in the High Schools, and to rather over Rs. 6-4-0 in the Middle Schools, and the amount recovered from fees comes to Rs. 14 a head in the High Schools, and between Rs. 3-4-0 and Rs. 3-12-0 a head in the others.

Primary education. There are 133 Upper Primary Schools with 8,500 pupils, and 1,124 Lower Primary Schools with 41,000 pupils, among which there are 307 Girls' Schools with 7,500 pupils. This comes to very nearly one primary school to every square mile or to every two villages.

The cost of education in the Upper Primary Schools comes to rather less than Rs. 3 per pupil, and the amount recovered

* Where no year is specified the figures are for 1908-09.

from fees to about Rs. 1-11-0 per pupil. In the lower primary standard boys cost a little under Rs. 2 each and two-thirds of this amount is recovered from fees; girls cost less than a rupee a head, but pay practically no fees.

Madrasas.

There are four aided *Madrasas* with some 500 pupils, but besides these there are 42 advanced schools with nearly 1,500 pupils, teaching Arabic or Persian according to their own standards, and 132 Elementary Schools in which 3,000 boys are taught the *Korān*. There are 14 Sanskrit *Tols*, besides two other schools in which Sanskrit is taught, but the total number of pupils is only 250.

Educational standard.

In 1881 about one male out of every eleven, and less than one woman in every 2,000 could read and write. In 1901-02 among the male population 21½ per cent. of the Hindus and 7 per cent. of the Muhammadans could read and write, while of women, one in every 110 Hindus and one in every 500 Muhammadans, were literate. The number of persons who could read and write English in 1901 was 2,270.

It is difficult to say whether there has really been much advance in education in the last 15 years. The number of schools shown in 1895-96 was 2,775 with nearly 58,000 pupils on the rolls. In 1898-99 there were only 33,500, and in 1907-08 there were 60,000 amounting according to the returns of the of the educational department to 35 per cent. of the population of the school-going age. The following year added about 2,500 to the number of students, but on the other hand the school-going population appears to have been calculated on the basis of the census of 1901, making no allowance for the rapid growth of population since then. It would be safe to say that the number of children of the school-going age must have increased by 10 per cent., and calculated on this basis the proportion of children at school in 1908-09 to those of school-going age is about 33 per cent. Of boys alone the number in 1908-09 was about 52,000 equivalent to 55 per cent. of those school-going age.

Female education

In 1899-1900 there were 63 girls' schools in the district with 1,138 pupils In 1908-09 there were one middle vernacular and 310 primary and elementary schools with upwards of 7,500 pupils, and another 3,000 were reading in boys' schools, making the total about 12 per cent. of the girls of school-going age. Two Model Girls' Schools have been established and 18 female teachers appointed.

The popular prejudice against the education of women is dying out fast, and the marriageable age of a girl in the respectable classes of Hindu society has risen perceptibly.

Management and inspection.

The management of primary and middle schools is entrusted to the District Board, and in towns to the Municipal Commissioners. High Schools are managed by School Committees subject to the control of the Educational Department. Such Committees

exist also for Middle and occasionally for Upper Primary Schools, but in regard to these are rarely of much assistance. Unaided schools are of course free from Government control, except in so far as they have to conform with the orders of the University. Until the current year the Subordinate Inspecting Agency was under the local authorities, but has now been placed under the Educational Department. The sanctioned staff for Noākhāli consists of 3 Deputy Inspectors, 11 Sub-Inspectors, and 2 Assistant Sub-Inspectors, all under the orders of the Inspector of Schools for the Chittagong Division. The whole of this staff has not been appointed.

CHAPTER XIV.

GAZETTEER.

Ambarabad or Omarabad.—A *pargana* in the west of the district, lying west and north of Bhulua with an area of 124·4 square miles, containing 960 permanently settled estates with a total revenue of Rs. 81,633. It is said to have been carved out of the old *rāj* of Bhulua in the beginning of the eighteenth century when it was still an uninhabited waste. The story runs that a Persian *pīr* by name Ambar (or Omar) Shāh came to the district and lived there in his boat working miracles and making multitudes of converts by whom the wastes were gradually reclaimed. He gave his name to the *pargana*, and it was at his instance that the Emperor Muhammad Shāh settled it with two brothers of Dehli, Amānullah and Sanāullah Khān at the very low revenue of Rs. 289. It appears in the accounts of 1728 as Omarābād Noābād Bhulua at that revenue.

Gambling and extravagance soon brought the proprietors into difficulties and they crippled their resources further by giving away most of the *pargana* in *tāluks*. Down to 1791 they paid a revenue of Rs. 50,000, and the Board then ordered settlement to be made with the *tālukdārs*. The demand was fixed at Rs. 1,06,437 but the *tālukdārs* refused to accept this and the estate was held *khās* for some time. It was not until 1795 that the Board sanctioned the settlement of the *pargana* for a revenue of Rs. 95,631.

The *pargana* was divided at first into 1,406 estates of which 41 were in the possession of Government and 5 were unsettled. In the first quinquennial register these five became 188, and 380 others were bought in at sales for arrears of revenue; so that at the time of the formation of the district of Noākhāli Government was in possession of 605 estates with a nominal revenue of Rs. 41,683. Of these, however, 90 could not be identified and others had lapsed into jungle, and eventually they were all consolidated under two *tauzi* numbers and farmed out for Rs. 27,179. The farming settlements continued for many years, until in 1869 the property was settled with the late farmer's widow subject to a permanent revenue of Rs. 30,000 and a premium of Rs. 80,000. The estate is now in the possession of Gobinda Chandra Singh and others of Murshidabad.*

Babupur.—*Pargana* in Begamganj and Feni *thānās*, area 37·33 square miles, 35 estates, land revenue Rs. 14,952. Said to have been a part of Bhulua granted to Bābu Khān, a Brāhman

* Collector's letter dated the 3rd February 1863.

from Hindustān, whose brothers' names survive in their houses Damad Khān bāti and Ārab Khān bāti. After Bābu Khān's death the *pargana* passed into the possession of a branch of the Sūr family, and in 1728 stood in the name of Uday Nārāyan Chaudhuri with a revenue of Rs. 350. In 1765 the revenue is shown as Rs. 12,984.

A feud among the owners, caused by the love affairs of one Rāj Chandra who wanted to marry a dancing girl, led to a great fight still celebrated in song as the 'Chaudhurir Larāi.' The estate was then divided and Government acquired successively at sales for arrears of revenue a one anna and a one anna eleven ganda share and settled them with other persons, while the greater part of the residue was bought by one Rādhākrishna Mazumdār, *diwān* of a former proprietor. His descendants were profligate and extravagant, and once more the estate came under the hammer. The six anna share went to the *zamīndārs* of Bhulua, and the rest to various persons.

A two anna share remained in the family down to 1865 when it was sold to satisfy the proprietor's debts and bought by Muhammad Kābil Miā for Rs. 10,920.

Bhulua.—The largest *pargana* in the district; area 245·5 square miles, divided into 185 estates at a total land revenue of Rs. 1,23,929. It represents the remnant of the dominions of the Sūr Rājās and in the revenue roll of 1728 A.D. stood in the name of Kirti Nārāyan with a revenue of Rs. 41,161; in 1789 A.D. the revenue was Rs. 99,469. In 1785 a four anna share was purchased by Ganga Gobinda Singh of Kāndi in the district of Murshidābād, the *Diwān* of Lord Hastings and founder of the Paikpārā family. He applied for partition, and Mr. Dandridge and afterwards a Mr. Meyer were deputed to effect it, but the parties objected to the award and in 1810 we find the twelve anna proprietors praying for the appointment of a common manager.* In 1833 the estate was brought to sale for arrears of revenue and bought by Dwarka Nāth Tagore, who sold it for about three lakhs of rupees to Rāni Katyāyani of the Paikpārā family, the ancestress of the present proprietors. The estate is now in the hands of the Administrator-General and is managed by a local Sub-Manager stationed at Noākhāli. Most of the property is let out in *pātni*.

Bhulua village a few miles west of Noākhāli on the Lakhipur road. Site of the Muhammadan fort established in the seventeenth century, and head-quarters of the district in the eighteenth

---

* *Vide* Collector's letters dated the 14th May 1790 and 19th March 1807. The purchaser is described as Ganga Nārāyan Chaudhri, and I am told that the purchase was made *benāmi* in this name. According to the Noākhāli Itihāsh the four anna share first purchased by Ganga Gobinda Singh was the part known as the Ashtahāzāri, which in the time of Rāni Shashimukhi, had passed out of the hands of the Sūr family and had been settled with her *diwān* Nara Nārāyan Rai.

century. It is not clear when it was abandoned, but in 1821 the Joint Magistrate was posted to Noākhāli, which seems to have been the head-quarters ever since.

Dandra.—*Pargana*, area 39·45 square miles. It is closely associated with Allahābād, area 8·17 square miles, and the two are divided into 36 estates with a land revenue of Rs. 22,340. These two formed the lands granted to a Muhammadan General for the protection of the frontier, and in 1728 stood in the name of Muhammad Arifat Chaudhuri with a revenue of Rs. 7,486. When it came under the Collector of Tippera in 1790 A.D. the *zamīndārs* were a most turbulent lot, and one of them before long was lodged in jail on charges of rape and murder, while the property was administered by the Collector. There were disputes as to the succession, and half was awarded to Muhammad Wāsik and Muhammad Amjad and the other half to Ilyās Khān. The main property was divided into five estates of Dāndrā and two in Allahābād. Three of the former, making up 8 annas 18 *gandas* of the *pargana*, were in possession of Government in 1861, a four anna share belonged to Muhammad Arshud and three annas odd to Afrunnissa. In 1864 Government sold its shares, four annas going to the Rājā of Hill Tippera and three annas to Faizunnissa Chaudhurani and others.

The other four anna share was bought by Manohar Ali Chaudhuri, and has since been sold again for arrears of revenue and bought by the Dālāl Bāzār *zamīndārs*. Chandra Nāth Chaudhuri of Senerkhil—*thānā* Feni—was the owner of a share of three annas odd. He is dead and his three sons and wife are now the joint proprietors.

Feni.—Sub-division in the east of the district; area 343 square miles; population 318,837. The sub-division was formed in 1876 and included at first *thānās* Feni, Chhāgalnāiya, and Mirkāsarai, but this last was retransferred in 1878 to Chittagong and part of Bāmni *thānā* was then made over to the sub-division. The central portion of the sub-division is low alluvial plain, similar to the rest of the district; the eastern portion, which abuts on Hill Tippera, is higher and sometimes undulating, with occasional mounds, *dipahs*, rising above the general level, and is liable to be flooded by the overflow of the hill streams. The Assam-Bengal Railway runs through the heart of the sub-division which is well supplied with roads and water communication. This sub-division is watered and drained by the big and little Feni rivers, the Muhuri and its tributaries the Silonia and Gotia, and by several sluggish canals or *khāls*.

The whole of *thānā* Chhāgalnāiya forms part of Chakla Roshnābād, an estate under the collectorate of Tippera belonging to His Highness the Rājā of Hill Tippera. Most of the neighbourhood of Feni station lies in *parganas* Amirābād and

Bedarābād, known as the Courjon estate but now the property of the Laws of Calcutta.

Feni.—Head-quarters of the sub-division of that name. There is no village of Feni, but in 1876 the head-quarters were established at Khyārā some two miles from the Feni river, which gave its name to the station. The site was found unsuitable and the town is now situated in *mauzas* Barāhipur, Shaivadebpur, Dādpur, Rampur, and Chāripur. It is on the Assam-Bengal Railway, 56 miles from the Chittagong terminus, the town is growing fast, and its roads and sanitation and that of the adjacent rural areas are managed by a Union Committee under the control of the Local Board. The principal buildings stand round the *Rājāji's* tank excavated by the District Board in 1890.

Jagdia.—*Pargana* between Bhulua and the Feni river. Area 67·37 square miles, 5 estates, land revenue Rs. 28,705. It was given as a *jāgīr*, valued in 1722 A.D. at Rs. 16,984, to Burā Khān, a Hindu appointed in the time of the Emperor Aurangzeb to guard the frontier. He is said to have given it to a Brāhman child, and in the decennial settlement it was divided into three estates, Brāhman, Dās and Kabirāj. There are now a large number of small proprietors who are represented by a common manager.

Lakhipur.—Site of a *thānā* of that name and of a sub-registry office, post office, and inspection bungalow. Connected by road with Sudharām (23 miles), Begamganj (19 miles), and Rāipur (10 miles). There was a cloth factory here established in 1756 and its ruins, known as Jackson's *kuti*, are still to be seen. It is an important mart, specially famous for its molasses, and has a population of over 5,000 souls. Its local affairs are managed by a Union under the *Sadr* Local Board.

Raipur.—At the mouth of the Dākātiā in the extreme north-east of the district on the Lakhipur-Chāndpur road. The most important mart in the district, with a large export of betel-nut, coco-nut, oranges, limes, and plantains. The office of the joint sub-registrar of Lakhipur is here, and there is an inspection bungalow.

Sandwip.—A large island in the Bay of Bengal separated from the mainland of Noākhāli by the Bāmni river. It was inhabited at a comparatively early date, and the Venetian traveller Cesare Federico who saw it in the year 1569 described it as one of the most fertile places in the world densely populated and well cultivated. It was then in the possession of the Muhammadans, and in the beginning of the seventeenth century passed into the hands of Portuguese adventurers. In 1662 it was under Mughal administration and formed with the adjoining islands of Hātia, Bāmni, and Shāgird-dihi, a single *pargana* divided into three estates or *tarafs*, each of which had lands in all the islands and a share of common lands. There were disturbances in the island in 1767 which were

quelled by troops, the owner of a 4 annas 1 ganda 3 courie share, Abu Tarāp, being killed in the fighting and his interests confiscated and made over to one Gokul Ghoshāl, Diwān of the Nawāb and real Ahdadār of the islands, whose machinations and oppressions led to Mr. Duncan being deputed to hold an enquiry in 1778. This share was thereafter known as *tarāf* Bhawāni Charan, after a servant of Gokul Ghoshāl in whose name it was registered.* In 1786 this *tarāf* paid revenue in Bhulua, and the others in Chittagong. At the time of the permanent settlement a number of petty estates were formed by the separation of *tāluks* or the resumption of grants. Between 1797 and 1821 two *tarāfs*, 5 annas 0 ganda 2 couries and 2 annas 15 gandas were sold for arrears of revenue and bought by Prān Krishta Biswās, whose estate was in turn brought to sale on the 1st July 1824 and bought by Government. The other interests were sold up soon after, and by 1830 all the original estates of the *pargana* were in the possession of Government. By an order dated the 29th June 1830 Government cancelled the sale of *taraf* Bhawāni Charan and directed its return to the owners in satisfaction of a decree they had obtained; but there was delay in giving effect to the order and the lands were measured along with the rest of the estate. In 1841 they were made over to a receiver of the High Court, and the rest were settled for thirty years, those in Hātia, Sandwīp, and Bāmni being dealt with separately by three different officers. In these settlements new alluvial formations were included and several of the small petty estates consisting of *khārija tāluks* or resumed lands were amalgamated.

In 1890 the Government estates in Sandwīp, Bāmni, and Hātia were sold for Rs. 1,95,000, half being purchased by Mr. Courjon and half by Mr. Delauney and Shib Dulāl Tewāri jointly, the revenue for the three estates being fixed in perpetuity at Rs. 38,420. The present proprietors of these estates are the representatives of the purchasers, and those of Bhawāni Charan's estate are Mrs. Delauney and the heirs of Shib Dulāl Tewāri. It is worthy of note that the purchasers of the Government estates are not allowed to have any right to new accretions †.

Sudharam.—Sudharām on the west bank of the Noākhāli *khāl* about two miles from the sea is the head-quarters of the district. It is said that the Muhammadans had an outpost here in about the year 1620, but in Rennell's time, 1787, it was not important enough to be shown in his atlas. In 1821 it was chosen as the head-quarters of the Joint Magistrate appointed to the charge of the

* The twelve anna estate referred to in the old correspondence seems to have been made up of this share and of others of which Gokul Ghoshāl had possessed himself wrongly and which on Mr. Duncan's recommendation were restored to their former owners.

† This account is based on Mr. H. G. Cook's report of the 20th April 1882; and on the report of the settlement of Bāmni, 1903. Mr. Dampier's report of 1837 gives the fullest detail.

district of Bhulua. It was formerly known as Noākhāli, and took its present name from one Sudhārām Mazumdār, a wealthy merchant and benefactor, who excavated the large tank known by his name.

In 1876 it was constituted a Municipality, but the municipal revenue is only Rs. 12,000, and the population in 1901 was 6,520. It is really nothing but a rural bāzār with a few Government offices and residential buildings. It was completely wrecked by the cyclone of 1893, and the Government offices erected since then are fine substantial buildings. There is a neat little Town Hall with a stage, billiard room, and library attached to it, and a good Circuit House has been built lately. The drinking water is supplied from Sudharām's tank, a fine one but spoilt by the growth of weeds. The town is connected by railway with Lāksām, and steamers run from it to the islands and to Barisāl.

INDEX.

Printed at the Pioneer Press, by Geo. Sim, No. 1438.—12-6-11.